

Inquiries of the Ministry
FOREIGN EXCHANGE

**EXPORTS FROM MARITIMES—QUESTION AS TO
 PAYMENT IN STERLING**

Hon. Douglas Abbott (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the hon. member for Victoria-Carleton (Mr. Hatfield) asked the following question:

I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Finance. Will the exporters of surplus potatoes, fish, lumber, and other commodities of the maritime provinces be allowed to accept sterling in payment for exports to the British West Indies and South American countries, thereby retaining those markets which they have built up over the years?

My reply is that the recent adjustment in the exchange value of the Canadian dollar as such will not affect in any way the position of exporters to the British West Indies or other parts of the sterling area. Exporters to those countries of products such as were referred to may still export and receive sterling in payment. That sterling will be converted, of course, into dollars at the new rate of \$3.07½.

So far as the South American countries are concerned, the situation is also unchanged. In those countries exporters have been in the past and will continue to be obliged to accept payment in United States dollars.

Mr. Hatfield: Do I understand the Minister of Finance to say that we can now accept sterling for shipments to the West Indies?

Mr. Abbott: We have always accepted it. It has always been convertible; if the British West Indies were allowed to import, they were allowed to pay in sterling and the sterling was made readily convertible.

Mr. Hatfield: The British West Indies have not been able to pay us in sterling.

Mr. Abbott: They have always been able to. If the hon. member means sterling that is blocked, of course they cannot. If he means sterling which cannot be used for the purchase of merchandise, he is right; but exports to the British West Indies which are allowed in can be paid for in sterling, and that sterling is made convertible by the Bank of England at the official rate. Exporters have to have an export permit to take the merchandise in. They have to secure it from the British, not from us.

Mr. Hatfield: We are still shut out.

**WASHINGTON MONETARY TALKS—QUESTION AS TO
 RESTRICTIONS ON IMPORTS FROM UNITED STATES**

Mr. W. Ross Thatcher (Moose Jaw): I had intended to direct a question to the Minister of Trade and Commerce, but as he is not in his seat I will direct it to the Minister of Finance.

[Mr. Winters.]

I hope he will not mind answering it. Will the Minister of Finance state whether the recent financial conference between Great Britain, the United States and Canada will result in any early change in the import restrictions on United States goods coming into Canada?

Hon. Douglas Abbott (Minister of Finance): No, Mr. Speaker. Of course that is a matter of government policy which will be announced in due course.

PUBLIC WORKS

**POST OFFICE BUILDINGS—WINNIPEG AND
 PETERBOROUGH**

Hon. Alphonse Fournier (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, on Monday the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) asked the following question:

I should like to ask the Minister of Public Works whether construction will be undertaken soon of the new federal post office in Winnipeg.

The answer is that in 1948 we filed notice of expropriation against this property, bounded by Graham avenue, Smith street, St. Mary avenue and Garry street. Sixteen properties were involved, and we have already settled and have the deeds for fourteen. The remaining two properties have been turned over to the exchequer court, and the hearings are in the hands of that court.

Plans are being prepared and developed by the Post Office Department to cover their requirements, after which it will be necessary to prepare the detailed plans. For this purpose the firm of Messrs. Blankstein and Russell, architects, of Winnipeg, have been retained. As this is a major sized building, it will require the best part of a year to prepare the detailed plans.

On the same day the hon. member for Peterborough West (Mr. Fraser) asked the following question:

When the minister is looking that up will he also find out and tell me when he is going to start the one in Peterborough?

In 1939 we acquired a site located on the southeast corner of Charlotte and Louis streets in Peterborough. During the war no attempt was made to erect the building, on account of conditions at the time. Immediately following the war it was decided to refrain as far as possible from work on any public buildings, in the interests of making the short supply of labour and materials available to private interests.

Together with the Post Office Department we are preparing plans covering the requirements of a building to meet the demands of the former. After the requirements have been determined it will be necessary to pre-