

Inquiries of the Ministry
THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

UNITED STATES IMPORT SURTAX—CHANNEL OF
CANADIAN REPRESENTATIONS TO U.S. GOVERNMENT

Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Finance. In light of the recent statement by Senator Frank Church to the United States Congress, which was a rather accurate and useful outline of the heavy impact the American surcharge is having on the Canadian economy but is reported to have been made at the initiative of and—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member should ask his question.

Mr. Thompson: I am coming to it—from information provided by two Canadian journalists because it was not available from other Canadian sources, would the minister inform the House whether the government is limiting its representations to the American government to diplomatic channels, through the State Department, or is it dealing with such power centres as the President's office or such prestigious centres as the House and Senate Foreign Relations Committees?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the government of Canada deals with the government of the United States, not with individual senators or congressmen. Our representations are made in that manner.

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POST OFFICE

STEPS TO IMPROVE SERVICE AND AVOID EXORBITANT
COST FOR MAILING LETTERS

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): My question, Mr. Speaker, is for the Postmaster General. In light of the statement by a senior official of his department, as well as by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre, that within nine years Canadians will be paying 26 cents to mail a letter in Canada, continuing the upward spiral that began in 1968, will the minister indicate what steps he is taking to improve the service so this exorbitant cost will be avoided?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member must recognize that he is dealing with a situation that may happen in nine years time and so the question should perhaps be placed on the order paper. In any event, he is asking for a general statement and I would think that kind of statement normally ought to be made on motions. The hon. member might like to rephrase his question along those lines.

Mr. Dinsdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your admonition. I deliberately included the phrase, "the upward spiral that began in 1968." In view of the fact that the postal service is the basic communications system in Canada, would the minister indicate what steps he is taking to avoid this continuation of exorbitant costs?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member is simply repeating the question he asked in the first instance, and I

[Mr. Benson.]

told him that the question was not in order asked in those terms.

Mr. Dinsdale: On a point of order—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Dinsdale: On a point of order—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Brandon-Souris rises on a question of privilege.

Mr. Dinsdale: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I thought I had rephrased the question in such a way as to make it a matter of urgency. Let me put it in these terms, Mr. Speaker. Is it the policy of the government to insist that the Post Office Department make a profit, and is the same policy applicable to the CBC.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member knows that the Chair indicated the question was not in order. The hon. member cannot rise on a point of order and ask a question which, in my view, is similar to the one that has been ruled out. If the hon. member thinks there is urgency, he has a right to come back at the time of adjournment. The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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MANPOWER

REQUEST FOR STATEMENT ON OPERATION RETRIEVAL

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration about Operation Retrieval, a matter about which there was considerable concern a couple of years ago and about which complaints have been renewed. Would the minister make a statement at an early date indicating what improvements have been made with regard to this operation during the last couple of years since it has been under criticism, and what results are being attained in light of the criticism to which the program is presently being subjected? Could the minister make a statement at an early date?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I shall certainly look into the question of making a statement at an early date about the tremendous benefits to Canada of retrieving back to it some of our—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. We are obviously getting into debate.

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• (2:50 p.m.)

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

INQUIRY AS TO DISCUSSIONS WITH PREMIER KOSYGIN
ON JOINING OF TWO CONTINENTS BY CAUSEWAY
ACROSS BERING STRAIT

Mr. Raymond Rock (Lachine): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Were there any talks with Premier Kosygin that would