

Inquiries of the Ministry

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of Fisheries): Mr. Speaker, discussions have been held between representatives of the prairie provinces and the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. I gather there is one more meeting scheduled. Legislation to establish this marketing board has already been announced in the throne speech.

FINANCE**JOINT COST PROGRAMS—REQUEST FOR
TABLING OF CORRESPONDENCE**

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): I should like to direct a question to the President of the Treasury Board relating to the tabling of communications received from the province of Ontario on the financial estimates of the cost of joint programs.

In view of the fact that the minister has referred to letters of February 5, February 27 and June 20 is he now prepared to table those letters and put the correspondence before us, so we may become familiar with this correspondence for discussion during budget debate?

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, with the consent of the government of Ontario I would be delighted to table all the official correspondence. I do not think the Leader of the Opposition would wish to initiate the practice of publishing any informal correspondence which clearly was intended to remain unpublished. In respect of official correspondence and with the consent of the government of Ontario they may be tabled.

Mr. Stanfield: In view of the fact the minister has been asked to seek the approval of the province of Ontario and has referred to the contents of these letters, would it not be appropriate to have them tabled?

Mr. Drury: I am not sure whether the question is addressed to me rhetorically or to you, Your Honour, but I do not think the Leader of the Opposition would wish to initiate a practice of publishing or tabling in the house correspondence of an informal character which has taken place between officials at different levels of government.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, does the minister suggest that letters between officials and that is a very wide and encompassing term— from the deputy minister down should not be tabled in this house?

[Mr. Schreyer.]

Mr. Drury: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I should have made it more clear to the hon. member. I did not say no letters should be tabled. I did say that informal letters between officials at various levels of government not intended to be published should not be subsequently published. I suggest this would quite seriously inhibit the full and free exchange of information which we are seeking.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, since the minister has referred to informal letters between government officials will he kindly advise the house how a determination is made as to what is an informal letter not to be published?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I think before we call orders of the day we might allow the hon. member for Marquette to ask a question.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to argue the point, but I want to be sure I am not understood as accepting the point expressed by the President of the Treasury Board. I want to take this opportunity to say I disagree with the position he has taken, and will seek an appropriate opportunity to discuss the matter.

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT**CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF
FORMER CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Craig Stewart (Marquette): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct my question to the President of the Privy Council. It relates to a question asked in the house on September 18, in reply to which the minister said the government was giving consideration to some means of enabling members to deal with the recommendations of the former chief electoral officer. Will the minister indicate what decision has been reached in this respect?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (President of the Privy Council): Yes, Mr. Speaker. Hon. members will have noticed last Friday reference of the subject matter of a bill dealing with the elections act to the committee on privileges and elections. The hon. member will also be aware that this committee will be holding its organizational meeting on Thursday next. It is the government's intention, subject to the business of the committees generally, to call together the committee on privileges and elections for the purpose of examining these various and different questions regarding the election system.