

Inquiries of the Ministry

[Translation]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRSMEETING OF EDUCATION MINISTERS OF
FRENCH SPEAKING COUNTRIES

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct my question to the right hon. Prime Minister.

Can he tell us whether an agreement has been reached by Ottawa and Quebec with regard to sending a Canadian delegation to the coming Niamey conference, or whether Quebec will send its own delegation?

Right Hon. P.-E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): The matter has not been settled, Mr. Speaker. However, the discussion is still under way and I am very optimistic about its results.

[English]

FINANCEINQUIRY AS TO CONTROL OF GOVERNMENT
EXPENDITURES

On the orders of the day:

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address a question to the Minister of Finance. In the minister's statement issued during the weekend he advised the country that during the first seven months of this fiscal year expenditures had exceeded revenues by 30 per cent more than they did during a similar period a year ago and that this situation is worsening steadily. My question is: In view of the situation, is the government in the near future expecting to announce the steps that it intends to take to correct the situation and to bring expenditures in line with revenues?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend, who knows so much about the financial world, should know that he should not pay too much attention to monthly financial statements unless he considers the effect of seasonally adjusting them over the whole year. Second, we have brought the finances of Canada under control, and in my budget speech I indicated what we were intending to do and what most people believe we intend to do.

Mr. Hees: I have a supplementary question for the minister. Is he not aware that during the time he was making his budget speech expenditures were exceeding revenues by \$52 million, almost three times as much as during the same month a year ago? Does he call this progress?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member is urging me to allow the minister to reply. However, there are only a few minutes left in the question period, and many members have not had an opportunity to participate until now.

LABOUR CONDITIONSNEWFOUNDLAND—UNEMPLOYMENT
RESULTING FROM FISH PLANT
CLOSING

On the orders of the day:

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): I want to direct a question to the Minister of Fisheries. Does the government intend to take any action to forestall the imminent closing of several major fish plants in Newfoundland, directly affecting over 6,000 plant workers and in excess of 10,000 fishermen?

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of Fisheries): As the hon. member knows, the 1968 fishing season is drawing to a close. The decision to shut down is up to the companies themselves. I might also comment that in addition to the usual programs of government assistance that have been available this year, there have also been expenditures on special programs of assistance during the past year and the total income in the Atlantic region is up substantially over 1967.

Mr. McGrath: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, and this is a very urgent question. Does the government intend to continue the deficiency payments program to fish operators?

Mr. Davis: The answer, Mr. Speaker, is no. The program came to an end on October 31, 1968, and any new program will have to be announced early in the new year.

Mr. John Lundrigan (Gander-Twillingate): I have a supplementary question. The minister has indicated that the deficiency payments have terminated. Can the minister indicate to the house, in view of the fact that next year's fishing season is in great danger of not being successful, what alternative proposals the government has for staving off literal starvation of the Atlantic fisheries?

Mr. Davis: As I said before, the industry has done fairly well in 1968. However, we will be announcing new programs early in the new year.