

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: According to my experience, Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult to get two economists to agree completely. Very often, opposition members themselves are not in agreement on a number of areas. I took my responsibilities. I announced that, to the best of my knowledge and after talking with government advisors, the Bank of Canada and others, our forecast for next year was 5 per cent growth. I have no reason at this point to change that, especially since we had 5.2 per cent growth in the third quarter of 1976, one of the best performances among developed countries at this time.

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● (1432)

THE MINISTRY**POSSIBLE FORMATION OF CABINET COMMITTEE TO REPRESENT FRANCOPHONES OUTSIDE QUEBEC**

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Secretary of State, I would address my question to the Prime Minister.

Since some months ago, in a brief to the government—and I understand the Prime Minister met them on this—the Federation of Francophones Outside Quebec urged the establishment of a permanent committee of Privy Council, on which the federation would be officially represented, to prepare with the government that over-all policy for minorities. Could the Prime Minister state whether such a committee will be established?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Acting Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, as Acting Secretary of State, I would like to indicate to the hon. member that consultations are now going on, and an announcement will be made officially in due time.

Mr. La Salle: The Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations knows very well the importance that the establishment of such a commission represents for the federation. In view of a forthcoming announcement, will the minister tell the House if his government intends to approve the establishment of this commission which seems so important to the association.

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I have already answered the question of the hon. member in my earlier reply.

Mr. La Salle: I have a last supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I know and everybody else knows that the federation is very concerned and is expecting an answer. My question is very serious, Mr. Speaker. Would the minister give the House his assurance that the federation will really be involved in the development of the overall policy that the Secretary of State intends to introduce?

Mr. Lalonde: For the second time in a row, Mr. Speaker, I must repeat to the hon. member that there will be an

[Mr. Gillies.]

announcement in due course by the Secretary of State, after the consultations now in progress.

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GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION**INQUIRY WHETHER GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO CHANGE DECENTRALIZATION POLICY**

Mr. Gaston Isabelle (Hull): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the popular Minister of Finance. Considering that the decentralization policy of the federal government affects several federal employees on the Quebec side of the national capital region and that, since the election of the new Quebec government made of idealists and middle class pseudo-proletarians, the real estate market on the Quebec side of the Ottawa river is almost at a standstill and the vacancy rate has reached 30 per cent in some sectors, does the minister intend to postpone his decision concerning decentralization at least, until the "Lévesque referendum", to avoid the risk of personal bankruptcy for those many devoted civil servants?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, we do not intend to change our decentralization policy.

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[English]

HARBOURS**REQUESTS FOR GRANTS FOR CONTAINER PIERS AT HALIFAX AND MONTREAL—GOVERNMENT POSITION**

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. Can he confirm or deny the report, while making a very substantial grant toward the container pier in Montreal, that the Treasury Board has turned down the request of the government of the province of Nova Scotia for a grant for a second container pier in Halifax, Nova Scotia?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, that is not true. Both matters are still under consideration by the government.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago the minister could not recall what the timing would be for the container pier in Halifax. Has he had a chance to refresh his memory? Can he give the House a firm date on which the department is prepared to recommend a second container pier for Halifax?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, it is increasingly evident to us the timing for increased activity in Halifax is such that construction for a new container facility would be about right to begin now.