

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member could scarcely find out what the next budget will contain by asking a question on orders of the day, and it seems to me that is the purport of his question.

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, surely the hon. member's question is in order, in view of the statement reported to have been made on this particular matter by the Minister of National Revenue.

Mr. Hazen Argue (Assiniboia): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, it is a well established custom that there shall be no budget leaks before the budget is made public. Here was a very definite statement by the Minister of National Revenue as to the contents of the next budget.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member is not on a point of order. If the hon. member's question relates to whether a statement made by the Minister of National Revenue was a declaration of government policy, I suppose it could be asked.

Hon. George C. Nowlan (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I had better answer this question, since I am the one to whom reference is made. In the first place, there could be no budget leak in view of the fact that due to the opposition we have not yet passed the budget that was brought down in December. Therefore it would be rather difficult to deal with future budgets.

What I said was this. I have the text in front of me, and this was a prepared text:

I think in the present state of international unrest and uncertainty one would not expect the government to substantially cut its expenditures—at this time.

I do not think that is a statement of budget policy. I repeat what I said:

I think in the present state of international unrest and uncertainty one would not expect the government to substantially cut its expenditures—

I was not talking about income tax.
—at this time.

It is true that afterwards I was asked by someone in an off the cuff reference as to the chances of increased taxes. I said that in view of the unrest of the day, the Congo situation and all the uncertainties with which the government was confronted, one might also assume that increases were almost as likely as decreases. Again, if that is a statement of government policy which, of course, it is not, then goodness help the government that makes such a statement of policy.

Mr. Pickersgill: Just loose talk.

[Mr. Benidickson.]

UNITED NATIONS

CONGO—INQUIRY AS TO SUPPORT FOR GHANA PROPOSALS

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Hazen Argue (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs. In view of the report from the United Nations secretary general's representative in the Congo to the effect that at least seven political prisoners have been deported to Mr. Kalonji's secessionist mining state and that three are rumoured to have been killed, all this indicating once again that the present United Nations command in the Congo has failed in its mission of bringing peace to that troubled land, will the government back the plan of the president of our sister commonwealth nation of Ghana, Mr. Nkrumah, that a new all-African United Nations command take over the Congo, disarm Congolese troupes, free political prisoners and convene parliament?

Hon. E. D. Fulton (Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs): I thank the hon. gentleman for having given me notice of this question, but in the circumstances I am sure he will appreciate that without in any way accepting his preamble to the question as a statement of fact, the only proper course would be to bring this to the attention of the Secretary of State for External Affairs and ask him to make a statement or reply on his return.

CONGO—CONSIDERATION AT SPECIAL OR GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Harold E. Winch (Vancouver East): In the absence of the Secretary of State for External Affairs I should like to direct a question to his parliamentary assistant, or to his deputy at the United Nations. Is any consideration being given to the report that a special meeting of the United Nations may be called to deal with the Congo situation and, if not, does the hon. gentleman anticipate that at the reconvened general meeting, which will take place on March 7, the Congo situation will be the first issue to be considered?

Mr. W. B. Nesbitt (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State for External Affairs): In reply to the first part of the question may I say I should like to have that stand until the return of the Secretary of State for External Affairs. With regard to the second part of the question, our information is that the United Nations general assembly will be reconvened on March 7 and I would think it very likely that the question of the Congo would be discussed at that time.