

Inquiries of the Ministry

the problem involved. No action has been taken by the United States government up to the present moment.

OIL—RESTRICTIONS ON IMPORTS INTO UNITED STATES

On the orders of the day:

Mr. E. G. Hansell (Macleod): May I ask a question of the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Over a week ago the former secretary of state for external affairs asked if an official note of protest had been sent to the United States respecting their cut-back of 15 per cent in oil imports from Canada. Would the minister tell us if that note has yet been sent; he stated it was in the course of preparation. Has it yet been sent?

Hon. Sidney E. Smith (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it will be sent today.

Mr. Hansell: A supplementary question. Would the minister care to lay on the table of the house a copy of that note?

Mr. Smith (Hastings-Frontenac): Yes, Mr. Speaker, subject to the usual reservations.

HOUSING

REPORTED FORECAST OF DECLINE IN 1958

On the orders of the day:

Mr. W. J. Henderson (Kingston): May I direct a question to the Minister of Finance, arising out of a report in the *Globe and Mail* of today of a meeting of the Toronto builders' exchange entitled "Grim Picture for '58; 147 Firms Will Fold, Builder's Prediction". Included in the report is a prediction that there will be fewer jobs in 1958.

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Henderson: Just a minute and I will come to it.

Mr. Harkness: If you have a question, ask it.

Mr. Gauthier (Portneuf): Be a little more patient.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The house seems to be in a hurry.

Mr. Henderson: If the Minister of Agriculture will look after the farmers he will have enough to do.

Mr. Fulton: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I ask you whether it is in order for the hon. gentleman not only to read from a newspaper report—

[Mr. Churchill.]

Mr. Gauthier (Portneuf): It is the *Globe and Mail*.

Mr. Fulton:—instead of asking a question, and more particularly to read from a newspaper report which speculates on what may be the case in the future, and speculates quite probably or quite possibly inaccurately? I ask you whether it is in order to ask a question in that form.

Mr. Gauthier (Portneuf): Coming from the *Globe and Mail* surely it could not be inaccurate.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member, while he is entitled to lay a factual background for a question, went on to read expressions of opinion; and in reading expressions of opinion he is adopting them as his own. That is contrary to the practice of the house at this stage. I would ask the hon. member not to include the latter part of his statement but to complete his question.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is this. Would the minister give consideration to this report and indicate the relief to this industry which he contemplates?

Hon. Donald M. Fleming (Minister of Finance): I have not seen the report, Mr. Speaker. If my hon. friend's reference to it is a fair summary of the report, I question whether it is an accurate report.

As to what the government is doing in that respect, this government has done much. The provision of \$150 million by this government for loans on mortgages for home construction under the National Housing Act last August has been completely taken up and did result this fall in a substantial increase in the number of housing starts for that period in 1957, over the housing starts in 1956. Unquestionably the infusion of that substantial amount of money into house construction channels was of tremendous advantage to the Canadian people and to the construction industry.

Furthermore, as the house will recall, an additional sum of a like amount was made available in the amendments to the National Housing Act which the house adopted in December. Not only has the first \$150 million been fully taken up but already, notwithstanding the fact that we are in the winter months, no less than \$35 million of that additional \$150 million has already been taken up.

I think, Mr. Speaker, it must be quite evident to all hon. members that the government has done much to assist the house construction industry and bring great benefits to Canadians in the housing field.