

of views on the help we can offer concerning this problem but no definite decision was made one way or another.

[English]

PEACEKEEPING FORCE—APPROVAL OF PARLIAMENT BEFORE
COMMITMENT MADE

Mr. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Secretary of State for External Affairs, I will direct my supplementary question to a minister who is certainly interested in this matter, the Minister of National Defence.

As the Prime Minister's statement makes no mention of parliamentary approval or consultation before committing our troops to a new peacekeeping task, and runs counter to the precedent established when parliament approved the peacekeeping mission in Cyprus and the observers mission in Viet Nam, as well as making a total mockery of the blandishments of the Secretary of State for External Affairs during the past two days, will the minister assure the House that any commitment made will be subject to approval by a resolution of the House of Commons?

Hon. Barney Danson (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I really cannot comment on the press release itself. Certainly, as the Secretary of State for External Affairs said yesterday, there is no reason to hold back at all: we want full and frank information on this question.

In so far as specific parliamentary approval is concerned, I think it would be difficult to make that commitment because one might have to react to particular circumstances. It is rather hypothetical today, because the only forces we have been asked to supply and which we are supplying are those offering logistic support. That has been announced and some of those troops are already serving in that role. The forces needed for the peacekeeping operation have largely been committed. There is no indication that we will be asked to serve in that role at this time, even though in a general review one could say that we have troops ready and available and quite capable of doing that job.

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THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

LEGISLATION TO AMEND BANK ACT—ECONOMIC PROJECTIONS

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Prime Minister keeps information from the public; we did not know until today that he also keeps it secret from his colleagues.

My question is to the Minister of Finance and it relates to the economic business and to the Bank Act that is being delayed by this government. It has now been established that the Department of Justice is drafting the bill. I presume the Minister of Finance has instructed the lawyers of his department on what he wants in the legislation. Would the minister tell the House now, as a matter of policy, whether it is the intention of the government to bring within the provisions of

Oral Questions

the Bank Act the caisses populaires and credit unions of Canada?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, this will be known when we table the bill.

Mr. Clark: A supplementary question. I have another question about economic business that is being delayed by this government so that Canadians will not know what they plan or do not plan to do about the Canadian economy. The minister has admitted today that his claim about the amount of fiscal stimulus was false. It is clear that all the projections, both in his statement of October and in the budget of March last year, are incorrect.

We have a situation where uncertainty is being created by the statements of a minister which are false, and the projections of a minister which are wrong. In light of that uncertainty, will the minister reconsider his refusal to give some guidance to the Canadian economy? Will he not give a commitment now for an early date on which this House may receive a budget from this government?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, the only final decision I have made about a budget is that there will be no budget before the end of this month. I asked to wait until April or May, depending on the circumstances, and I will advise the public accordingly.

As far as projections are concerned, I would like to say to the Leader of the Opposition that in December the president of the Conference Board of Canada—who now is planning to be defeated as a Tory candidate—predicted exactly the same figure that I did, 5 per cent growth. The same day this gentleman announced that he was to run for the Tories, the Leader of the Opposition said that nobody believed my prediction. I would like to tell him that his own candidate was in complete agreement.

Mr. Clark: A further supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The minister knows that events have also passed him by in that regard. We have a situation now where there will be no budget and no revised Bank Act. Will the Minister of Finance tell us, at least, whether he and his government are prepared to respond to the request of the Premier of Ontario and to the request that I am sure is shared by the other provinces? Is he now in active consultation with the ministers of finance of the provinces, five of whom have already brought in budgets since the February meeting—the province of Quebec being the sixth province that will bring in a budget, leaving this government virtually alone in its refusal to bring in a financial statement and budget—and will the minister tell us whether there is an intention on his part, in the absence of a budget, in the absence of a Bank Act, in the absence of any other economic activity, to at least convene a meeting of the ministers of finance next month?