

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Gleave: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to point out to you and to the minister that the question I asked has not been answered. It was, would an investigation be made—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. That is not a point of order, but if the hon. member has a supplementary question I will return to him in a moment. For the moment I believe the right hon. gentleman from Prince Albert has a supplementary.

Mr. Diefenbaker: In view of the fact that the minister's edict or suggestion was not accepted and as he is convinced that any increase is wrong, will he bring to the attention of the organization established to meet such situations the need of action being taken, because everybody seems to be running wild in the matter of prices in Canada today?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a supplementary question to the minister. In view of his statement that the government has no power to deal with this matter, may I ask him whether he has at any time carried on any correspondence with the premiers of the various provinces on whether or not the provincial governments would be prepared to pass enabling legislation giving to the Prices and Incomes Commission the necessary power to deal with unjustified price increases?

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, that is a question that falls within the general financial policy of the government and should be directed to my colleague, the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, may I direct it to the Minister of Finance.

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): I would like to take the question as notice, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gleave: Mr. Speaker, again I direct a question to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. In view of the fact that these price increases are falling on an industry which is already in a depressed condition, will the minister investigate the effect of these increases on the farming industry in western Canada?

Mr. Speaker: Of course the hon. member is merely repeating the question he originally [Mr. Speaker.]

asked. He may feel the question has not been answered, or has not been answered in a satisfactory manner, but he cannot simply repeat the question he asked previously.

SEEKING OF POWER TO INSTITUTE PRICE CONTROLS

Mr. Max Saltzman (Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a supplementary question to the Prime Minister. I would like to ask the Prime Minister to consider that every attempt to deal with the question of price increases has evoked an apology from the cabinet ministers—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Would the hon. member kindly resume his seat? The hon. member has been granted the floor and will be granted the floor again for the purpose of asking a question.

Mr. Saltzman: May I come to the specific question, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Saltzman: Will the Prime Minister in his discussions with the provincial premiers at the forthcoming conference seek the constitutional power for price controls in Canada?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I wrote to the premiers of the various provinces suggesting that after the constitutional conference in December we have a further conference early in the new year, presumably in February, to discuss other matters of importance to Canada apart from the constitutional ones. I have received favourable replies from most of them, and I am in the process of sending out letters today suggesting that we look for dates for that meeting and items for the agenda. If the provinces are agreeable I think we would be very anxious to suggest the problem of inflation if it appears that the Prices and Incomes Commission has to report negatively on its efforts. This of course we hope will not happen. But should that happen and should the provinces be agreeable, we would be prepared at the federal level to discuss this very important matter.

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Mr. Speaker. Has the increase in prices by the oil companies violated any