

Inquiries of the Ministry

brought back in the form of pledges by the various sectors of the economy.

Mr. Stanfield: If I understood the Prime Minister correctly, he indicated that the Prices and Incomes Commission has been conveying to certain parts, at least, of the private sector guidelines which would constitute an acceptable measure of restraint. Is it the intention of the Prices and Incomes Commission or of the government to make public the guidelines which are being suggested by the commission?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I believe that this is a tactical consideration which the commission itself will have to determine. It is my understanding that its intention was to seek some form of voluntary agreement from as many areas of the economy as possible before making such statements public, or at least before announcing them. The reason, of course, is that it is important to get agreement from the various parties before stating that agreement had been reached, before creating expectations that perhaps could not be fulfilled.

The newspapers have been full of news about these matters. We know that some companies have agreed, that some sectors of industry have agreed and that some sectors of the labour movement have not agreed. But as far as we are concerned, Mr. Speaker, the commission is still proceeding with its work. I do not think the commission takes the position that it has had final answers yet to its proposals; it is still hopeful that there might be some kind of voluntary restraint. We are waiting, along with the Leader of the Opposition, for some statement from the commission as to the next step it is going to take.

Mr. Stanfield: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Is the Prime Minister in a position to indicate whether or not the Prices and Incomes Commission indicated any guidelines as to restraint in connection with the steel industry?

Mr. Trudeau: I am unable to say, Mr. Speaker. If within recent weeks the commission has had any specific meetings with the steel industry or, for that matter, with any other particular industry, then I have had no report of these individual meetings. Like the hon. member, I have read certain statements in the newspapers attributed to companies and unions in regard to suggestions made by the commission. However, I do not have a list, nor have I requested such, of all the

parties who have been interviewed or approached by members of the commission.

Mr. Stanfield: A further supplementary question. As I read the comments in the press made by industry and labour regarding the proposals of the Prices and Incomes Commission, they related to general agreements on guidelines. Is the Prime Minister going further and suggesting that the Prices and Incomes Commission has submitted specific guidelines to particular sectors of the economy?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I repeat that I do not know exactly whom the members of the commission saw, and I do not know exactly what they said. I have not asked them for a report on the matter, nor do I think it proper to do so at this time. As I say, Mr. Speaker, I know as much as the hon. member. I should add that I know as much as I have read in the newspapers, which is perhaps not very much.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I had intended to put this question to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, but in his absence may I put it to the Prime Minister. In view of the suggestion made by the Steelworkers Union that the Prices and Incomes Commission might be asked to hold its inquiry into the price increases in steel in public, may I ask whether the government will use its good offices to impress upon the Prices and Incomes Commission the desirability of acting on this suggestion?

Mr. Paul Langlois (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the commission is an independent body, and it is not for the government to tell the commission what to do at this time; at least, I do not think it is. Would the hon. member repeat the second part of his question?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I repeat and clarify the question. I recognize that this body is an independent one. That is why I asked the minister or the Prime Minister whether the government would use its good offices to impress this suggestion on the Prices and Incomes Commission. After all, this sort of thing has been done before, so why not do it again?

Mr. Langlois: Mr. Speaker, I cannot do this. The minister is in Washington at the moment