

Inquiries of the Ministry

in the House more effectively and more constructively by prearrangement among the House Leaders. However, this avenue is not provided in Standing Order 26 and the decision has to be made by the Chair.

In view of the fact that from a procedural standpoint I would find it extremely difficult to reject the motion and in view of the importance of the matter I feel I must put the motion proposed by the hon. member. I will therefore ask whether the hon. member for York South has leave to move the motion for the purpose of the House discussing the matter introduced by him under the terms of Standing Order 26(8).

As there is no opposition, the proposed motion will stand over until three o'clock this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**FINANCE****CONSIDERATION OF REDUCTION OF INTEREST RATES**

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I had intended to pursue a question or two with the Secretary of State for External Affairs on the difficulty in Cambodia, but in view of the debate this afternoon I shall turn my attention to the Minister of Finance. In view of the apparently changing international business climate, is it contemplated that any reduction in interest rates in Canada will be considered? Also, is it contemplated by the Minister of Finance that the present bank rate will be continued or does he intend to open discussions with the Bank of Canada regarding this matter?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated on Wednesday, I am in very close consultation with the Bank of Canada. If there were any such decision it would be announced in the usual manner.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. In view of the extent of unemployment in the country and in view of the concern that has been expressed about unemployment, as well as the apparently changing climate internationally, would the minister be prepared to reconsider the hard stance he has taken both in respect of interest rates and economic policies generally?

Mr. Benson: Well, Mr. Speaker, the matter of our fiscal and monetary policy is constantly

under review. If there is to be any change I would announce it to the House.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, would the Minister of Finance not take into consideration that this is not simply a matter of policy to be announced in due course but a matter of the policies being pursued which are placing unnecessary strain upon the country and the people of the country?

Mr. Benson: Mr. Speaker, I think that is a very interesting statement but it is not a question.

LOWERING OF HOUSING INTEREST RATE

Mr. John Gilbert (Broadview): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. In view of the serious decline in housing starts for the first quarter of this year and the need to stimulate housing and provide employment, would the minister make representations to the Bank of Canada and Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation to lower the interest rate so that there may be more activity in the housing field?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the only interest rate controlled by the Bank of Canada is the rediscount rate.

EASING OF BANK LENDING POLICY IN SLOW-GROWTH AREAS

Mr. John Lundrigan (Gander-Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a supplementary to the Minister without Portfolio in charge of the loan acts which are administered by the Department of Finance. In view of the representations which have been made to his department, is he in a position to say whether the banks are ready to ease their lending policies under these three acts in the slow-growth areas of Canada? This question has been brought to the minister's attention.

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister without Portfolio): Mr. Speaker, I have been looking into this matter in consultation with officials of the department who are in touch with the banks, particularly in the hon. member's province, and I hope to have further progress to report shortly.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**CAMBODIA—INVASION BY UNITED STATES AND SOUTH VIET NAM ARMED FORCES**

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to anti-