

*Inquiries of the Ministry***INDUSTRY****INQUIRY AS TO STEPS TO STIMULATE
CONSTRUCTION**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Minister of Finance whether his attention has been drawn to the figures released by Southam Building Reports to the effect that construction contracts awarded in the first two months of this year have declined by 20.8 per cent compared with the first two months of last year, that major contracts over one million dollars are down by 144 per cent, residential contracts by 10.8 per cent, construction for business by 36.1 per cent and institutional awards by 18.4 per cent. The provinces which seem to be most adversely affected are Quebec, the prairie provinces and British Columbia. In view of the serious repercussions of this situation not only for the construction industry but for the industries supplying building materials, I should like to ask the minister whether his department has any plans in prospect to stimulate construction during the present year and whether he will be making a statement in this regard.

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I have not seen the figures to which the hon. gentleman has referred, but my department and I are watching economic developments very closely and if I feel it is necessary to make a statement I will certainly be happy to do so. Government policies are under constant review.

Mr. Douglas: May I ask the the minister whether the information given to him by his department coincides with the statistics in Southam Building Reports showing a substantial decline in contract awards for the first two months of this year, and whether he intends fairly soon to make a statement as to the monetary or credit policies it is proposed to follow in order to cope with the situation?

Mr. Sharp: The information I have at the present time is that economic expansion has come down to a much more sustainable level. I had expected there would be some decline in the rate of construction expenditures compared with last year, when they were so high that it was necessary for the government to cut back its own expenditures. Indeed, I would have been very disappointed if there had not been. Our objective should be not to repeat the experience of 1966 but to reach a much more sustainable and stable level.

Mr. Orlikow: May I conclude with one more sentence. The burden is on the prosecution to prove a knowing waiver by the accused, and the interrogation will be conducted in such a way, and will be taken to show a lack of waiver unless proof to the contrary is provided.

Motion agreed to and bill read the first time.

FISHERIES**SEALS—STEPS TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH
REGULATIONS**

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Michael Starr (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Fisheries. In view of the fact that 11 ships are setting sail from Halifax within the next day or so to kill seals, what measures is the minister taking to ensure the observance of the new regulations?

Hon. H.-J. Robichaud (Minister of Fisheries): Mr. Speaker, I have recently made a number of statements in the house on this matter, particularly on February 13 when I spoke during the budget debate. A meeting of our officers who will be asked to participate in or try to control this operation took place in Halifax this week. We shall have a fisheries officer on every sealer engaged in the gulf of St. Lawrence. We shall have officers at every landing point so we can control operations by aircraft. We have secured the services of four helicopters, and we shall have a number of officers—

Mr. Speaker: Order. My impression is that the minister is now reiterating the statement to which he referred a moment ago. I know how important this question is, but I suggest that his statement should not be allowed to go any further.

Mr. Starr: I should like to ask whether in addition to this supervision the minister himself is planning to be on the spot to make certain that the sealers comply with the new rule calling for the use of a 30-inch club only in the slaughter of baby seals.

Mr. Robichaud: I believe my visit to the ice packs last year during the sealing operation was sufficient to enable me to realize what regulations should be implemented in order to establish full control. I am confident that our officers and representatives of the S.P.C.A. who will be on the ice this year will be able to give factual reports on what will take place.