

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Benson: The reason I indicated we would introduce a draft bill is that people could then take a look at it and assess the implications of the various changes on the remainder of the tax legislation. I have also indicated that the draft bill would be referred to a committee of the house, and that the government would not be bound to the ideas presented in the draft bill, but would feel free to change any of them if it were convinced by representations to the committee that such changes were in the interest of the people of Canada.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a supplementary question with respect to the date of a budget, but may I direct it to the government house leader. In view of the fact that one of the principal changes that we made in our rules was to provide for a certain orderliness in our parliamentary year, which envisaged the budget coming in the spring, will the government house leader discuss this matter with the Minister of Finance? Does he not agree that if the budget is put off until the fall it will mess up the first full year that we had planned to be on a regular basis?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I will certainly be discussing with the Minister of Finance the question of the timing of the budget in the forthcoming session; that is the session following this one.

[Translation]

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask a supplementary question.

A few minutes ago the minister was referring to a taxation reform and to the preliminary draft of a bill. Since there cannot be taxation without money, could he not at the same time consider a monetary reform, when the preliminary draft of the bill is studied?

[English]

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): A supplementary question to the Minister of Finance. Would the minister not agree that his budget of October 22 was a deferred budget and would normally have been presented in May of that year had there not been an election? Would he also not agree that the economic state of the nation should be reported to the country this spring, rather than at some indefinite date in the future?

[Mr. Stanfield.]

Mr. Benson: Mr. Speaker, it would be my intention on appropriate occasions to keep the members of the house informed, as they desire, with regard to the economic state of the nation. As I have said, if there are any material changes from what I forecast in my budget of October 22, I will have no hesitation in coming back to the House of Commons with a budget. This does not necessarily mean there will be tax increases, but I would explain to the House of Commons the changes that have taken place, if they are materially different from what I forecast in October.

ESTATE TAX ACT

PERMISSION TO THOSE ADVERSELY AFFECTED TO APPEAR BEFORE STANDING COMMITTEE

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address a question to the Minister of Finance. In view of the very large volume of correspondence which has been received by the government and by all members of this house from those who are concerned with what they consider will be the adverse effects of the government's proposed estate tax legislation, will the minister use his good offices to assure those representing particularly the large groups, who feel they will be adversely affected by this legislation that they will be allowed to appear before the Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs to express their views, before the matter comes before the house for judgment?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, there has been a good deal of correspondence with respect to the proposed changes in the estate tax legislation, which I maintain will over-all be beneficial to the people of Canada. All such correspondence is being answered. In addition to this, I have provided information to all members of the house so that they can deal with correspondence they may have received in this regard.

Mr. Hees: A supplementary question. I think the minister will agree that his department has never received—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member can ask only a supplementary question; he cannot make a supplementary statement.

Mr. Hees: In view of the great importance of this matter to a great many citizens of this country, would the minister use his good influence to see that those representing these