

*Oral Questions*

seems to be one which comes within the scope, as the words of the Standing Order read, "of ministerial action" in the specific case. Indeed, if information exists which ought to precipitate consideration of any kind of inquiry or in fact the inquiry itself, surely the hon. member ought to make that information available, as has been suggested a number of times in preceding question periods, as opposed to moving the setting aside of the ordinary business of the House for the purpose of having a debate in order to bring that information forward.

In the final analysis, it appears that the hon. member's suggestion really ought to result in a substantive motion requiring or suggesting action on the part of the government, which is certainly not the goal of Standing Order 26. The Standing Order states that because of the very urgent and important nature of the problem sought to be put before the House, the House ought to adjourn rather than take an individual step which would be contemplated in a substantive motion. I feel that would be the proper course for the hon. member to take at this time.

● (1430)

I would remind hon. members that important though the matter may be, it has been considered on several occasions by the House over the past few days. In fact, it had at least the potential of being the subject of considerable debate during the recent discussion on conflict of interest, so it has been considered by the House in other ways. It is of continuing importance but I doubt whether it is of such an urgent character as to justify setting aside the ordinary business of the House.

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

### THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

#### INFLATION—REQUEST FOR STATEMENT ON RESULTS OF ATTEMPTING TO OBTAIN CONSENSUS OF VARIOUS GROUPS

**Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance arising from the statement in the Speech from the Throne that the government had initiated a series of consultations with the principal groups in our society and the statement in the budget referring to a comprehensive series of discussions with all sectors of the economy. After all this time, can the minister tell us the results of these consultations, if any, over and above his statement yesterday that he has a mind to renew these talks early in the new year?

**Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance):** The hon. gentleman keeps looking for instant solutions. These consultations are being pursued on an informal and exploratory basis. When they reach a stage at which I can report to the House, I will do so.

**Mr. Stanfield:** In the light of the allegations by the government and the minister that these consultations have been going on, now, for a number of months, may I ask the minister whether he is still engaged in the process

[Mr. Speaker.]

of ascertaining what might be acceptable to the principal elements of the economy? Has he yet reached any view as to the position which might be reasonable or necessary to adopt in the present economic circumstances?

**Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton):** These conversations, aimed toward a consensus, are still in the exploratory stage.

**Mr. Stanfield:** Bearing in mind the reference in the Speech from the Throne to these consultations having already been begun and other references to this effect by the minister, notably at the time of the budget, can the hon. gentleman give us any reasons why we ought not to regard this succession of statements as nothing more than a game to con this House and the people of Canada into believing something is happening?

#### INFLATION—POSSIBLE SETTING OF CEILING ON GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

**Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe):** My question, too, is directed to the Minister of Finance. Considering that the minister has now achieved the dubious distinction of having tolerated the greatest peacetime inflation of any minister of finance in Canadian history in that consumer prices have risen 27 per cent since he took office in January, 1972, can the hon. gentleman specify what concrete measures he intends to take to combat inflation at the federal government level? Has he, for example, given the President of Treasury Board a definite ceiling to govern federal expenditure in the coming year? If so, what is it, and, if not, why has he not done so?

**Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance):** I think the hon. member could have saved himself posing that question if he had read the budget.

**Mr. Stevens:** I suggest that my question was not answered. Has he set definite guidelines for the President of Treasury Board to follow in the coming year so that the cabinet may understand the limitations on possible expenditures, and, if so, what are they?

**Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton):** As I stated in the budget, we are trying to restrict increases in expenditures this year to 15 per cent.

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### ENERGY

#### SYNCRUDE PROJECT—GOVERNMENT POSITION ON PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT—CONTINGENCY PLAN TO MEET DEFICIT IN SUPPLIES

**Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Since the accuracy of the calculation made by the National Energy Board that Canada will be self-sufficient in oil up to 1982 depends upon Syncrude coming into production, as does the government's plan to provide eastern Canada with oil, and in view of the offer made by Imperial Oil that any partner willing to buy into the project would be welcome, may I ask whether the govern-