

Oral Questions

Minister. Yesterday the Minister of Finance said, and I quote:

The suggestions advanced in the working papers did not constitute a firm set of proposals by the federal government—

That was with regard to the consensus program. Now that the meeting and discussions have taken place, is it the government's intention to put a firm set of comprehensive restraint proposals before the provinces, labour and business?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the proposals that were put forward for discussion purposes only are being followed up by discussions with the labour unions, the business organizations and possibly other groups. If out of these discussions emerge a more definitive set of proposals, of course they would be made. However, as the Leader of the Opposition knows, in a process of this kind we can only make progress if there is in advance some indication of the kind of support there would be for the proposals.

INFLATION—POSSIBILITY OF MORE MEETINGS WITH PROVINCES, BUSINESS AND LABOUR SEEKING CONSENSUS ON RESTRAINT

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Are there in fact more meetings scheduled with the representatives of labour or business before the government makes this assessment as to the prospects of a consensus program and the presentation of a budget?

● (1410)

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the ministers who have had the most recent discussions have been discussing those meetings with their colleagues. We have not yet had a thorough appraisal and until that is completed I cannot answer the question.

Mr. Stanfield: A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The whole thing seems to be in an even greater state of confusion than I dared anticipate. Could the Acting Prime Minister tell the House whether it is the intention of the Prime Minister, since the Minister of Finance has said that a good deal is expected of the provinces if a consensus is to be really comprehensive, to canvass the provincial premiers to assess their reactions, even to the fragmentary and informal suggestions that they have received from the Minister of Finance?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, it would be our intentions to have discussions with the provincial governments since, of course, in many areas the provincial authorities do have jurisdiction and authority. Whether it would be at the prime ministerial level or otherwise has not yet been decided.

INFLATION—POSSIBILITY OF MEETINGS WITH WOMEN'S GROUPS IN SEEKING CONSENSUS ON RESTRAINT

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, I have a further supplementary question for the Acting Minister of Finance. As the government during their consensus discussions have met with various groups, hopeful-

[Mr. Stanfield.]

ly from all sectors of our population, including, for example, the CLC and certain business representatives, would the Acting Prime Minister indicate whether any similar meetings have been held with women's groups, such as the National Council of Women, with a view to arriving at a meaningful consensus, and if not, why not?

Hon. C. M. Drury (Acting Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, as you know, the government believes that one should not discriminate against women. If one is talking to the business community, one should not try to sort out the male side of the business community from the female side. Consequently, in looking at the large groups, government, business and labour, there has been no attempt to make special arrangements to meet the female side of any of those institutions.

INFLATION—POSSIBILITY OF FURTHER MEETINGS WITH CONSUMER GROUPS SEEKING CONSENSUS ON RESTRAINT

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, for the Acting Minister of Finance. As the representatives of the government have recently met during the inflation talks with certain labour union leaders and only yesterday with representatives of business, would the Acting Minister of Finance indicate whether, subsequent to the one hastily called meeting in Ottawa in early April, he has held any further meetings with consumer or social worker groups, such as the Canadian Council on Social Development?

Hon. C. M. Drury (Acting Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, to the best of my knowledge no further meetings have been held at the ministerial level with the groups mentioned. There have, however, been what are known as consultations at the technical level, which are meetings between officials rather than ministers.

INFLATION—REASON FOR REJECTION OF GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS FOR RESTRAINT BY BUSINESS—POSSIBILITY OF COUNTERPROPOSALS BY BUSINESS

Mr. Max Saltzman (Waterloo-Cambridge): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct my question to the Prime Minister in the absence of the Minister of Finance. In view of the fact that the representatives of Canadian business with whom the minister met yesterday seemed to have rejected the government's proposals for wage and price control, can the Prime Minister inform the House whether he has been informed of the reasons for that rejection, and can he say whether the business community has given the government a shopping list of proposals, as the Canadian Labour Congress has?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I believe the question, perhaps inadvertently, has conveyed the wrong impression. We did not put a proposal to the businessmen for wage and price controls. They may have expressed opinions on that, but according to the report that I had of the meeting, they were prepared to discuss constructively further with the minister and other ministers the whole question of seeking a consensus and exercising restraint in the economy.