

Inquiries of the Ministry

to the Minister of Finance. Could the minister inform the house as to his intentions with respect to tabling the main estimates for the current fiscal year and also whether he intends to table supplementary estimates at the same time?

Hon. Walter L. Gordon (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I will make an announcement on that subject a little later, after the debate on the speech from the throne has been completed.

STATEMENTS BY SPEAKER IN BOTH FRENCH
AND ENGLISH

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Harold E. Winch (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the right hon. Prime Minister. In view of the fact that it is his expressed desire to speed up the operations of the House of Commons so as to facilitate dealing with the people's business, will the Prime Minister take under consideration consultation with the Speaker of the house, in light of the fact that we have simultaneous language translation to determine whether it is necessary for all statements made by the Speaker in French to be repeated in English and all statements made in English to be repeated in French?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think this is entirely a matter for your own decision, but if you would like to discuss it with me I shall be glad to do so.

(Translation):

FINANCE

CONSULTATIONS RESPECTING LOANS TO
MUNICIPALITIES

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Heward Grafftey (Brome-Missisquoi): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Justice. Did any members of the federal cabinet get in touch with the premier of the province of Quebec, Hon. Jean Lesage, before recommending that federal loans be granted to municipalities?

Hon. Lionel Chevrier (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I am aware of no communication such as the one mentioned by the hon. member.

CLAIMS FOR REFUND OF TARIFF SURCHARGES

Mr. Remi Paul (Berthier-Maskinonge-Delanaudiere): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Justice. Does the minister intend to recommend that the government pay the claims for refund of the tariff surcharges levied last June by the Conservative government by order in council [Mr. Barnett.]

and presumably paid by merchants and businessmen, and which would amount to approximately \$80 million?

Hon. Lionel Chevrier (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I replied to that question last Friday by saying that, since the matter is *pendente lite*, it would not be proper for me to answer such a question at this time.

(Text):

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. May I ask the Minister of Justice if it is the intention of the government to put in a defence to the action when it comes before the courts?

Mr. Chevrier: I think my hon. friend will realize that government policy in this respect will be announced in due course.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask a question in connection with the strange answer given by the Minister of Justice. Specifically, it is this. Does the government intend to settle the actions instituted by the law firm of Mr. MacTavish, Q.C., without having recourse to the courts in that regard?

Mr. Chevrier: I think the same answer I made originally to this question applies to the question of the former prime minister. Because of the manner in which the question has been put I do not think it deserves any other reply than that since this matter is now before the courts it would be most improper for any minister of the crown to make a statement or reply such as that which the Leader of the Opposition now seeks.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I now ask the hon. gentleman this question, which does not concern the stand to be taken by the government. Does the government intend to put in defences to the actions that have been taken and have the matter come before the courts, or does it intend to settle these actions started by the law firm of which Mr. MacTavish, Q.C., is a member?

Mr. Chevrier: I now reply to the prime minister in the same manner—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chevrier: I apologize. I meant to say that I now reply to the right hon. gentleman that he perhaps more than anyone else knows that these matters are the subject of court action, not only one action but perhaps 30 or more, and he knows that questions of that