

Mr. Schumacher: Mr. Speaker, I should like to refer to question No. 169 standing in my name which first appeared on the order paper this session on October 14 last. It also appeared on the order paper of last session a year ago last January. I wonder whether some effort might be made to reply to that question in the reasonably near future.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

FINANCE

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY CRISIS—CANADIAN ACTION TO ACHIEVE STABILITY

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question concerning the currency and exchange difficulties to the Minister of Finance who has just arrived in time. While realizing that the revaluations that have taken place will perhaps benefit Canada's export industries and thereby ease our difficulties, may I ask the minister whether he intends to take any initiative with regard to bringing about a greater degree of stability in international monetary exchanges in view of the tremendous interest of this country and our economy in greater stability?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Discussions have been taking place through the International Monetary Fund, Mr. Speaker, and our director at the IMF has been in touch with the government for guidance in these discussions.

Mr. Stanfield: Does Canada intend to call for a special meeting with regard to the present difficulties or the degree of instability that seems to exist? Does Canada intend to call for a special conference or intend to put forward any recommendations for changes in view of the fact we have been through three or four crises in the last three or four years?

Mr. Benson: I am trying to think back to the three or four crises in the last three or four years, Mr. Speaker. Discussions normally take place through the IMF. If it is decided that it is advisable to have a meeting of the governors of the IMF or the Group of Ten, of course Canada will take part.

Mr. Stanfield: In view of the importance of the subject to Canada, is the Minister of Finance taking a position with regard to these difficulties and the present international arrangements regarding foreign exchange? Is the government of Canada making any recommendations or does the government regard it as satisfactory to have a continuing crisis?

Mr. Benson: Of course not, Mr. Speaker. The government of Canada does not regard it as satisfactory. The normal course of discussions is through the IMF. We are taking part in those discussions through our director at the IMF.

Inquiries of the Ministry

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY CRISIS—CANADIAN REPRESENTATIONS TO INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND ON METHODS OF FIXING EXCHANGE VALUES

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Since Canada is a non-conforming member of the International Monetary Fund in that it has floated its exchange rate for 11 months or so, would the minister not think that it would be incumbent upon Canada to make special representations now to the governors of the IMF that special measures be taken to consider alternative methods of fixing exchange values in light of the fact that there now seems to be a breakdown and we have a mess in Europe at the present time?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. friend knows, studies of the exchange system have been taking place through the IMF. We are participating in these through our permanent director at the IMF.

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AGRICULTURE

INTERPROVINCIAL MARKETING—DISCUSSION WITH PROVINCES—CONSULTATION WITH FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PRIOR TO ESTABLISHMENT OF PROVINCIAL RESTRICTIONS

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Prime Minister arising out of continuing developments in obstacles to interprovincial trade in agricultural produce which, if not checked, may extend to other products as well. Has this question been the subject of discussion at federal-provincial conferences or other meetings in the past and, in any case, has the government or any department of government been consulted by those provinces which have established obstacles to free interprovincial trade?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Yes, Mr. Speaker, this subject has been discussed at federal-provincial conferences. The federal-provincial conference on the constitution of last September, I believe, discussed the matter at some length and, as I reported to the House at the time and since, most of the provinces present encouraged us to proceed with great haste with Bill C-176, because they felt that it was an honest attempt to meet the problem. The general subject, which I am sure also interests the hon. member, of the Canadian common market was put on the agenda of the constitutional conference at the initiative of the federal government some time ago. When time is found for that on the agenda, we will discuss the general constitution in relation to the need to preserve the Canadian common market.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I put this question seriously to the Prime Minister. Since Bill C-176 is obviously a permissive piece of legislation which may or may not be implemented by some provinces or may or may not be