

The Chairman:—but if hon. members want to continue the cross-examination, if I may call it that, of the President of the Treasury Board, it may be useful. I recognize the hon. member for Cape Breton-East Richmond.

Mr. MacInnis: Mr. Chairman, is the President of the Treasury Board aware of anybody in the present government who is not a member of this House?

An hon. Member: No.

The Chairman: Order, please. I am not sure we are advancing the work of the committee by this sort of informal interchange. I will recognize the President of the Treasury Board. Has the hon. member for Lotbinière a question?

[Translation]

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Chairman, I wish to put a very specific question to the hon. President of the Treasury Board.

He said yesterday in his speech, and I quote:

To again refer to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, at the present time there is no minister to whom the members of the House can point the finger of responsibility: it is diffused.

Which means we need a minister in charge of these general policies.

Mr. Chairman, yesterday my hon. colleague for Compton (Mr. Latulippe) put the following question to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson):

Mr. Speaker, could the hon. minister tell us whether he intends to lower the discount rates of the Bank of Canada again so that chartered banks also bring down their interest rates for a better balanced economy?

Mr. Chairman, the President of the Treasury board knows as well as I do that the Bank of Canada is placed by law under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Finance. Now let us look at the minister's answer:

Mr. Speaker, this is a matter for decision by the Governor of the Bank of Canada. If he has any such intentions he will, of course, notify the public in the normal way and would be in consultation with me...

Mr. Chairman, this one instance of the lack of parliamentary control and the minister of Finance—

[English]

The Chairman: Order, please. With respect, the hon. member took the floor to ask a question of the President of the Treasury Board. Would he please ask his question.

[Translation]

Mr. Fortin: I was coming to the point, Mr. Chairman, a point which the President of the Treasury Board does not seem to be missing. This demonstrates how a member is denied the right to know anything about this government's policies and stresses the fact that the minister is not actually responsible.

Is this the kind of responsibility in store for the future ministers in charge of a ministry, or will they be subject to a stricter responsibility and tighter parliamentary control?

Business of the House

Mr. Drury: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member is well aware of the fact that the Bank of Canada Act states quite clearly the duties, functions and responsibilities of the Bank itself and of its Governor. What the Minister of Finance had in mind the other day was that under the statute approved by Parliament the responsibility for policy questions does not lie with the government but with the Governor.

[English]

The Chairman: Order, please. Would hon. members resume their seats. If the hon. member for Lotbinière has a supplementary question I will recognize him, but it seems we are entering very substantially into debate and may be denying other hon. members the opportunity to take the floor. The hon. member for Lotbinière.

[Translation]

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Chairman, in view of the explanations just given by the hon. President of the Treasury Board, let me ask if this means that under the law, the Governor of the Bank of Canada is not responsible before Parliament for his decisions or for his influence on the Canadian economy through the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Drury: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member for Lotbinière is well aware that it is not up to me to interpret the existing laws. He is seeking legal advice and I suggest that he reads the statutes relating to the Bank of Canada.

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Chairman, on a question of privilege—

[English]

The Chairman: Order, please. It being ten o'clock p.m. it is my duty to rise, report progress and request leave to sit again at the next sitting of the House.

Progress reported.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, might I be permitted to ask the government House leader what we will be doing tomorrow, so that we may be adequately prepared?

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I had better resist the temptation to make a comment on that point so as not to halt the progress being made in this House. Tomorrow I had in mind beginning with the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Convention Act, on the understanding that because of the intensive preparation the speeches will be short, to the point and few in number. Following that we would continue with the present bill which some hon. members find so exhilarating, others depressing.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I ask the President of the Privy Council whether he could tell us if the House could expect to enjoy the presence in the chamber tomorrow of the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion, so that the House will be given the opportunity of directing questions to the minister on the statement