

the provinces and on the activities and price initiatives of the Anti-Inflation Board, particularly in view of the cost of living increases that were announced yesterday?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): I would be pleased to do so, but of course within the context of the appropriate parliamentary opportunities.

ANTI-INFLATION PROGRAM—EFFECT ON INVESTMENT

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): In view of the importance of this program in relation to the whole question of the economic position of Canada, and in view of the statement on January 22 of the treasurer of Ontario who echoed the concern of the chairman of the Economic Council of Canada about the potential inflationary dangers of inadequate investment and the difficulty that this program might create for investment, does the government have a prediction as to the capital investment and the increase thereof in 1976, which the Economic Council of Canada cited at 2 per cent for itself and which the treasurer of Ontario called a potentially disastrous situation for Canada? What is the government's prediction for the period?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): As I have indicated to previous questions, that is the kind of question which I think could be dealt with most effectively in a general economic statement that accompanies the budget. I do not think there would be much usefulness at this point in trying to make such statement.

ANTI-INFLATION PROGRAM—SUGGESTED RECONSIDERATION OF DATE FOR BUDGET IN VIEW OF INCREASED COST OF LIVING

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Having regard to the statement just made by the minister with respect to the budget, if that is where it is to be made, has the minister reconsidered the date he set for the budget in view of these things that are important to the Canadian economy as a whole, and in view of all the unanswered questions with respect to the anti-inflation program and questions that were brought home to us all yesterday by the increase in the cost of living in this country?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): It seems to me that the hon. member is confusing two things. In the course of the budgetary statement, of course, the government attempts to set out what it feels will be the trend in economic factors, including the levels in investment, and it really makes no sense to do that except in the context of a budget. As to the anti-inflation program, as I mentioned yesterday, there will be opportunities within the House proceedings to discuss either details about this or the program in general, and I would be quite happy to do so within these opportunities.

Oral Questions

ANTI-INFLATION BOARD

NUMBER OF CORPORATIONS SELECTED FOR PRICE MONITORING—REQUEST FOR LIST OF NAMES

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Yesterday, in reply to questions put to him by me the minister did not deny that the government had selected only 350 corporations for its price monitoring procedure. I should like to ask the minister explicitly today: has the Anti-Inflation Board selected only 350 corporations for such monitoring and, if so, what was the basis for that selection? Will the government take steps to provide a list to the House, and therefore to the people of Canada, of these corporations?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): I am not sure of the figure to which the hon. member is referring. The government has in fact sent out the requirement to file to 6,500 firms.

Mr. Broadbent: I am aware, as I think other members are, that the board sent out a list in January to 6,500 firms, but it is also a fact that they are only looking at some 350 within that list, and it is on that point I want confirmation from the minister. Have they or have they not simply selected 350 from this list of 6,500, which is only in the neighbourhood of 5 per cent, and if so, does the government really believe it can have an effective price control program by monitoring such a few firms?

● (1120)

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): I think it would be more accurate to say that while it may not be possible to continuously monitor 6,500 firms, selective monitoring, as indeed occurs under our income taxation system, of the returns—

Mr. Broadbent: Very different.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): It is exactly the same thing. The sampling would be an effective means of putting those reporting on their operations under scrutiny, and it will be known that a scrutiny is being conducted.

REASON FOR GIVING SOME OFFICIALS ADVANCE NOTICE OF DIVISIONS—REQUEST FOR NAMES OF OFFICIALS

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): With regard to the efficacy of the same program, would the minister confirm that the Anti-Inflation Board is giving advance notice of its decisions to seven government officials in government departments outside the Anti-Inflation Board, including the Prime Minister's office, before such information is made available to the public and to other members of the House of Commons? If it is in fact providing such information to seven or so government officials, would the minister inform the House why these people are being informed in advance, and would he provide a list of the names to the House?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): I am not sure whether there are seven. It seems to me to be common sense, however, that a board which reports to the government—indeed, through me to parliament—should be keeping in close touch at all times with other aspects of the