

Oral Questions

10. On what date will the commercial fishermen be able to resume fishing in Lake St. Clair?

Return tabled.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

INFLATION—STAGE OF DISCUSSIONS SEEKING A CONSENSUS OF VARIOUS GROUPS

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance who told me last Friday that, with regard to his government's attempt to achieve a consensus, the exploratory stage would commence in January. If the exploratory stage is to commence in January, what stage have we been in since the Speech from the Throne, a pre-exploratory stage? Could the minister indicate what has been going on until the present.

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I will accept the hon. member's definition.

Mr. Baldwin: Prehistoric.

INFLATION—PROPOSALS OF GOVERNMENT AND NAMES OF PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR SEEKING CONSENSUS OF VARIOUS GROUPS

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): I do not know quite why there is so much security surrounding this operation, but could the minister tell us whether the task force that has been established, he said, to co-ordinate and set up a schedule for this exercise has prepared government proposals to be discussed during this exploratory stage or, if it has not prepared such specific proposals, why is it that the government is waiting until some time in January to commence this exploration?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): The purpose of the exploratory stage is for the government to come in with a position that is not firm but one that opens up a dialogue and discussion with various sectors of the economy as to what in their opinion would be a reasonable position for each of those sectors to take, arriving at a consensus for limiting respective demands in the economy. Up to this stage, the discussions have been limited on an informal basis to ascertaining whether there was any chance for this type of operation to succeed at all.

Mr. Stanfield: I must confess to a certain bewilderment, which is very unusual for me under these circumstances, as to what has been going on, if anything. I would like to ask the Minister of Finance, as a final supplementary question with respect to this pre-exploratory stage, whether it is going to become an exploratory stage some time in the new year or whether the minister is now in a position to indicate who is in charge of it because he said in the House on Friday that the task force had been established but he was not sure whether he was free to indicate who

[Mr. Holmes.]

was to head the task force. Can he at least give us that crumb of information? If total security surrounds what is going on, can he at least tell us who is doing it?

An hon. Member: Mackenzie King.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): When this stage begins, we will be making appropriate statements in the House and the personnel of the task force will be described to the House in detail.

Mr. Stanfield: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. When the Minister of Finance explains this he sounds very much like Geoff Scott imitating me explaining the PC Canada fund.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INFLATION—GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES IN SEEKING A CONSENSUS OF VARIOUS GROUPS—POSSIBLE COMPENSATION FOR THOSE WHO OPERATE WITHIN NATIONAL CONSENSUS

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): May I ask the Minister of Finance whether, when he sets out on his pursuit of a national consensus for voluntary restraints next month he can tell the House if before entering into these negotiations, hopefully leading to a national consensus on voluntary restraint, he is prepared to tell the House what guidelines the government has evolved for itself?

An hon. Member: 50 per cent!

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): At the exploratory stage there are no guidelines at all. The purpose of the exercise is to ascertain what, in the view of various sectors of the economy, are reasonable positions to take.

Mr. McGrath: May I ask the minister if he has conceived of a plan to compensate those who are prepared to operate within a national consensus, and, if so, what form will that compensation take? Does the minister propose to back this up with appropriate legislation in the House?

● (1450)

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): As I said in the budget speech, Mr. Speaker, the plan is not one to be imposed; it is one to be mutually evolved by reason of the consensus process itself.

Mr. McGrath: May I ask the minister if he has put it to the provincial ministers of finance that his plan involves a compensatory factor for those groups in the economy who are prepared to operate within the restraints which would be imposed upon them within the national guideline.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): No, Mr. Speaker, that was not put forward to them in that detail.

GOVERNMENT POSITION ON RESTRICTING EXPENDITURES IN VIEW OF PROPOSED SALARY INCREASE FOR MEMBERS

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, a question for the President of the Treasury Board. Since the Minister of Finance informed the House last