

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Munro: Mr. Speaker, the types of discussions that are taking place relative to how the federal and provincial governments would get together on this whole question of paramedical services and the extension of cost-shared areas precludes my saying what will be done with respect to any particular profession. I am precluded from stating, until the discussions are completed, whether action could be taken just because one province as distinct from others may want an extension.

MEDICARE AND HOSPITALIZATION—RECOMMENDATIONS
ON WAYS OF SAVING MONEY

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Since there has been a good deal of talk by the government with regard to ways of saving money in the medicare and hospital plan field, I ask the Minister of National Health and Welfare when we may expect a report on the ways this administration is adopting to save money in this field.

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of National Health and Welfare): As the Leader of the Opposition may be aware, Mr. Speaker, a task force report, which was developed as a result of federal and provincial participation in the whole health cost area, was prepared which contained many recommendations. Many of these recommendations have been accepted by various levels of government in terms of joint action to achieve this objective. The specifics as to what further action can be taken by both levels of government will be made known following the health ministers' conference this week.

Mr. Stanfield: A supplementary question. Following the conference this week, will the minister make a report to the House stating precisely what recommendations have been accepted and at the same time putting a dollar tag on the savings involved?

Mr. Munro: I will be very pleased to consider taking this action, Mr. Speaker.

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[Translation]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

ESCALATION OF PENSIONS OF RETIRED EMPLOYEES

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I want to direct a question to the Secretary of State.

[English]

Is the minister—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): After all, one should be bilingual and use both languages. Is the minister now in a position to answer the question I directed to him on Thursday, November 26, which was as follows:

Can the minister state when the CBC will put into effect an arrangement for the escalation of the pensions of its retired employees similar to the arrangements for retired public servants that were passed by this House last spring?

[Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands).]

The minister said he would inquire.

Hon. Gérard Pelletier (Secretary of State): I have an answer, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Mr. Pelletier: But this is an answer which probably will not please the hon. member because it is precisely that I have not yet received the answer to his question.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed, from Thursday, December 3, consideration of the motion of Mr. Benson, that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, since the budget speech was delivered on Thursday night, we have had an opportunity of assessing what thin gruel it is. The country has had an opportunity to examine the budget. There has been a flow of reaction through newspaper comments and the like. I have yet to see one editorial positively accepting the premises of the minister's speech or the recommendations which he made.

There is a rather odd situation this afternoon. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) cannot be here for the resumption of the debate. There is a valid explanation why he is not here, and I am not complaining about his absence. However, the members of this House are faced with a rather odd situation when discussing the financial affairs of this country. The minister is attending a conference with his provincial counterparts. Financial negotiations and arrangements between the federal government and the provincial governments will be decided at this conference. The members of this House will not have an opportunity to say anything about what will happen in their province. It matters little whether they are members of the government or whether the provincial government is of the same party stripe. They will not participate in the negotiations nor will they represent the people of their province during such negotiations. It is as though the cabinet, which in effect is the government, has almighty power. The administration is the government. The Minister of Finance is subject to the advice of his senior officials.

Yesterday, by way of historical interest, I read volume three of the Mackenzie King memoirs which dealt with the early years of dominion-provincial conferences. In 1945 and 1946, particularly 1946, the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas) participated in those negotiations. They were very difficult. He knows even within the limited disclosures by the diaries of Mr. Mackenzie King, there was much horse trading and knifing in the back. It makes one wonder whether