

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am quite sure the minister is fully capable of answering that question—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chevrier: That is doubtful.

Mr. Speaker:—but I doubt if the house would be patient to listen to him during the period of time it would take. I really must suggest to the hon. member for Okanagan Boundary that this is scarcely the type of question he could expect to have answered on orders of the day.

Mr. Hansell: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Is this a supplementary question?

Mr. E. G. Hansell (Macleod): Yes. While you have ruled, Mr. Speaker, that the question asked by the hon. member for Okanagan Boundary is not one that can be answered on the orders of the day, may I ask the finance minister when the house can definitely expect him to make a statement with respect to the results of his conference yesterday with the officials of the Bank of Canada?

Mr. Fleming: Mr. Speaker, I can assure my hon. friend that, when the government is in a position to announce policy or to make any announcement that will justify occupying the time of the house, that will be done. I can also assure my hon. friend that, so far as yesterday's meeting is concerned, it was not the only meeting of its kind that has ever been held. The Bank of Canada is an adviser to the Minister of Finance and meetings are held from time to time, with varying frequency, with the senior officials of the Bank of Canada and senior officials of the Department of Finance. The meeting that was held yesterday was one that had been arranged a few days in advance. It was not the first meeting of that kind that has been held in recent times, nor is it the last of its kind that will be held.

Mr. Hansell: In other words, we are not going to be told.

Mr. Fleming: Mr. Speaker, I am quite sure that my hon. friend has been in the house long enough to know that it is highly improper for any responsible minister to disclose publicly communications that pass between him and the advisers in his department.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): That is not the position you used to take.

Mr. Fleming: In this respect, Mr. Speaker, advice received by the Minister of Finance and communications passing in that relationship between him and the senior officials

[Mr. Sinclair.]

of the Bank of Canada are clearly within that well recognized and time-honoured rule.

REPORTED STATEMENT BY MINISTER AT
OAKVILLE, ONT.

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Colin Cameron (Nanaimo): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Minister of Finance. Has his attention been called to the report of his speech to the Oakville-Trafalgar chamber of commerce appearing in yesterday's *Journal* and, if so, is he correctly quoted when this report carries within quotation marks these words:

"—the danger of inflation has been checked and the rise in the cost of living is now levelling out".

If the minister has been correctly quoted, can he inform the house as to the source of this reassuring information, in view of the fact that the latest figures produced by the dominion bureau of statistics indicate that in October the consumer price index reached a new all-time high of 123.4?

Hon. Donald M. Fleming (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the house has listened with much interest to the speech of my hon. friend. He smuggled into his question things that he thought would be taken as statements of fact; but if he is going to put it on that basis I must take issue with what he puts forward in certain respects as statements of fact.

An hon. Member: He was quoting you.

Mr. Fleming: So that the house may have a balanced impression of what I said at Oakville I would very much like to have the opportunity of reading a couple of paragraphs in which I dealt with the subject.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Marler: Table it.

Mr. Pearson: We do not want a speech, we want an answer.

Mr. Fleming: I had a text on the occasion in question, and the statement read by the hon. member for Nanaimo was not complete.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): How about answering the question?

Mr. Fleming: I will. I was asked if I was correctly reported, Mr. Speaker, and this is what would have been a complete report of what I said in this respect:

It is the duty of the Minister of Finance to keep the economic state of this nation under constant examination. Without any hesitation I say to you that the Canadian economy is undeniably strong. There are sectors in which its advance is not as swift as at other periods and, like the United States, we entered some months ago upon a more level plateau of economic activity.