

justify its existence by improving the flow of information from the government to the people and vice versa.

• (1120)

INQUIRY AS TO MEASURES TO PROVIDE GREATER FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Acting Prime Minister whether the government is giving consideration to introducing measures that will provide for greater freedom of information, as was at one time proposed by the Minister of Finance and as I proposed in a private member's bill? Also, would such measures include steps to provide for a greater, franker and fuller flow of information in reply to both written and oral questions in this House?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, like the hon. member I have been a member of this House for quite some time—

An hon. Member: Too long.

Mr. Sharp: —and I have never seen more questions asked, more questions answered, nor more information provided by the government—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Baldwin: That illustrates my point.

Mr. Bell: Where were you yesterday?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I now recognize the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar, after which the Chair will recognize the hon. member for Champlain.

Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister. Would it be possible to bring this information department to a peak of efficiency so that it could provide us with copies of the publication on pensions and welfare?

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[Translation]

INDUSTRY

REVIEW OF POLICY RESPECTING PETROCHEMICAL INDUSTRY—SUGGESTED DISCUSSION BY FEDERAL AND QUEBEC MINISTERS

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce.

Does the minister intend to meet his Quebec counterpart, Mr. Saint-Pierre, in order to discuss the policy which seems at present the subject of another litigation between Quebec and Ottawa?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I have met Mr. Saint-Pierre, as I had met his predecessor, on a number of occasions. I think the suggestion is valid. I had thought of it myself and I intend to meet Mr. Saint-Pierre again soon.

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a supplementary question.

As the minister indicated that he was willing to revise the policy concerning the matter in which the Quebec Minister of Industry and Commerce is interested, I should like to ask him whether the government is still willing to do so?

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, before meeting Mr. Saint-Pierre, I shall naturally consult with the federal ministers who are either interested in or responsible for sectors related to that of the petrochemical industry.

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[English]

FINANCE

PURCHASE OF AMERICAN DOLLARS—REQUEST FOR INFORMATION—INQUIRY AS TO POSSIBILITY OF WAGE AND PRICE CONTROLS

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister because of the absence of the Minister of Finance for several days, which must have some significance. In view of the fact that foreign investors are unloading United States dollars and that the soaring Canadian dollar is hurting the export market, would the government let the Canadian people know something of the mess in which the finances of the country are by revealing at once—I would suggest on Monday—the total amount expended each day by the Canadian government in the purchase of American dollars? During the last year the increase in American dollars has been about \$100 million a month and apparently there has been an increase in the last two weeks. Would the minister provide that information in order that Canadians may understand what the situation is instead of the matter being entirely concealed from the people as a whole?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, as the right hon. gentleman himself prefaced his question, we are facing a very difficult and worldwide situation arising out of the weakness of the American dollar, which is reflected in the values of all currencies the world over, and the rising price of gold. As far as the operations of the Canadian government in the exchange market are concerned, this is not a matter that the Minister of Finance discusses on a daily basis. I will bring the attention of the minister to this question, and I am sure he will be able to satisfy the right hon. gentleman when he returns to the House.

Mr. Baldwin: Ask Ben; he had all the answers last year.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I should also like to know whether the minister recalls that the former secretary of the treasury of the United States, Mr. Connally, prophesied what the effects would be on the Canadian dollar although the former Minister of Finance, the hon. member for Kingston, said that he did not fear any increase in the level of the dollar. Has the government now changed its views in that regard, having changed ministers of finance?