

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Benson: Mr. Speaker, we have stated that the policy we have is one of a freely floating dollar. If that policy is to be changed it would, of course, be announced in the House in the usual manner.

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. May I ask the Minister of Finance whether it is acceptable to the government of Canada that the Canadian dollar should move up beyond par with the United States dollar?

Mr. Benson: Mr. Speaker, I should not like to see the Canadian dollar appreciate further.

MEASURES TO LOWER EXCHANGE VALUE OF CANADIAN DOLLAR

Mr. Max Saltzman (Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question which I direct to the Minister of Finance. Is the minister taking any measures to bring about a lowering of the value of the Canadian dollar in relationship to the United States dollar and, if so, what might the measures be?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, we are not taking any such measures at the present time. As I have stated, our dollar is floating freely. We are not intervening in the exchange market except to a minor extent to see there is no undue fluctuation, and this is now the policy of the government.

Mr. Saltzman: A further supplementary question.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Chair will recognize the hon. member for Waterloo and perhaps one or two supplementaries on this subject, but I would suggest to hon. members that we might attempt to go to other subjects after we have had the supplementaries. For the moment the Chair recognizes the hon. member for Waterloo on a supplementary.

Mr. Saltzman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May I ask the Minister of Finance whether he is giving any consideration to lowering interest rates in Canada below those of the United States as a way to reduce the value of the Canadian dollar?

Mr. Benson: Mr. Speaker, if my hon. friend would take a look at exchange movements he will find that the short range movement of funds has been out of Canada, thus offsetting to some degree the balance of payments surplus that we have through our very favourable trading account and through capital investment for loan purposes.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Fundy-Royal.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Lotbinière on a point of order.

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, while the Minister of Finance was speaking, the interpreter, who, nevertheless, is doing his best, stated that he could not hear the minister. Consequently, French-speaking members have not heard a word of the answer. Could this be corrected immediately?

[Mr. Woolliams.]

Mr. Speaker: The only suggestion that I can make is that the minister himself repeat his answer in French. That might perhaps prove difficult.

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, on the point of order, I wonder if the new loudspeaker system, which has a clanking sound, could not be replaced by the old one which was decidedly better?

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: Obviously there are difficulties, technical and mechanical, with the new system and I regret at this point that I took credit for its installation. On a question of privilege I might seek permission to withdraw that part of my statement. However, hon. members will realize that this is the first experience we have had with the new system and gallant efforts will be made during the next hour and throughout the day to try to improve it for the benefit of hon. members. The hon. member for Fundy-Royal.

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NATIONAL SECURITY

STAY OF PROCEEDINGS AGAINST PERSONS CHARGED UNDER PUBLIC ORDER (TEMPORARY MEASURES) ACT—FEDERAL GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. R. Gordon L. Fairweather (Fundy-Royal): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Justice. Has the government made any representations to the government of Quebec about its decision to order an indefinite stay of proceedings against 32 persons charged under the Public Order (Temporary Measures) Act? Has the government taken a position on the correctness of using this procedure of a stay of proceedings and, if so, what is that position?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I have made no representation to the Attorney General of Quebec who is, of course, entitled to examine all factors in determining whether or not it is in the public interest to continue or suspend such charges pursuant to section 490 of the Criminal Code. I have ordered the federal Department of Justice to examine further the question of whether legislation is necessary to clarify the effect of an order of stay of proceedings by a provincial Attorney General. As a matter of fact, I ordered this to be done pursuant to a resolution of the Canadian Bar Association last year, and it was one of the items on the agenda for the uniformity commissioners this summer.

Mr. Fairweather: At some later date could we have a sort of statistical catalogue as to the success of the Public Order (Temporary Measures) Act vis-à-vis those people who have been charged under it, and so on?

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I would think that the Solicitor General might well approach the Attorney General of Quebec for this type of statistic.

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, may I ask a supplementary question?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary North on a supplementary.