

Main Estimates

discussed with regard to public service salaries on compensation, on the one hand a new approach or a new total package and, on the other hand, the possibility of setting a level above which there is to be no collective bargaining, can the minister say whether these two matters have been discussed with the bargaining units, the representatives of the employees? If not, will there be such discussion before a policy is finally determined?

Mr. Andras: Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes to both questions. Discussions have begun, are continuing, and will continue before any final decision is made with regard to possible amendments to the Public Service Staff Relations Act. I assure the hon. member of that. I regret I missed it in the question of the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) a few minutes ago.

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, my questions to the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Andras) begin with respect to his estimates fact sheet No. 3. On page 5 of that fact sheet he sets out various increases and decreases, summarized as to the major changes in his estimates. I would first draw the minister's attention to the decreases.

Included in those decreases, for example, we have the Export Development Corporation showing an amount of \$365 million less compared to the current fiscal year. Will the minister indicate if any account has been taken into consideration of the fact that the Export Development Corporation is borrowing externally? They have traditionally borrowed through the Minister of Finance, but they are now borrowing in the general public market. It is on the covenant of the Government of Canada. I wonder if included in that decrease is an allowance for the amount they will be borrowing externally as opposed to borrowing directly from the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Andras: I think it is quite clear that we intend to permit the Export Development Corporation to go to the private market for certain funds. We have named a target amount here. If he is talking about borrowing externally, it is under the authority of the Minister of Finance to permit the Export Development Corporation to do so. That is the intention, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stevens: As the president of the Export Development Corporation, Mr. John MacDonald, had indicated that they may be committing themselves this year to a further \$2 billion in export financing, and he anticipates that will be totally financed externally in the sense that he will not be drawing on the Minister of Finance or the Consolidated Revenue Fund, will the President of the Treasury Board quantify for us what would be the amount that the Export Development Corporation increase would be as opposed to the decrease if that adjustment were taken into account?

Mr. Andras: Mr. Speaker, I regret I cannot give the hon. member the exact detail. I am familiar with the area. There are some plans under consideration which either the Minister of Finance or myself will be making known in more detail

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

soon. The final details have not been set out yet. I will try to get that for the hon. member.

Mr. Speaker: I will allow a final supplementary to the hon. member for York-Simcoe, and conclude questioning with the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom) and the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence).

Mr. Stevens: Surely in the over-all context of Treasury Board figures, they have some figure for the external borrowing that will take place in the Crown corporations listed here? Perhaps an easier way to express it would be all the non-budgetary amounts that heretofore would have been included as an estimate, but now, because they are being borrowed in the private sector, will not be included. Am I correct in assuming that certainly \$1 billion will be added and it could be as much as \$2 billion?

● (1612)

Mr. Andras: In these estimates and these statements that have been made, the fact sheet limits the identified amount which we have clearly flagged and the hon. member noticed it—that is the \$365 million that we have identified with regard to the Export Development Corporation. At the moment there are no other specific items that we have identified in respect of the spending plans for 1978-79. The \$365 million is flagged, and the hon. member noted it.

Mr. Nystrom: In the remarks made by the minister he said words to the effect that he was concerned about sticking the knife into somebody else's guts. Since I thought he was concerned about programs that affect ordinary people, may I ask why the government chose at this time to eliminate the consumers' skim milk powder program which amounted to \$17.9 million last year and helped low income people?

Mr. Andras: Mr. Speaker, with respect, I think that kind of detail could be conveyed to the hon. member in committee by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) or, if he is involved, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Allmand) on an appropriate occasion.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker: I shall invite the hon. members for Richmond (Mr. Beaudoin) and Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence) to put a question. The hon. member for Richmond has the floor.

Mr. Léonel Beaudoin (Richmond): Can the President of the Treasury Board tell the House, since the national debt went up by \$9 million from 1977 to 1978, increasing debt servicing charges by 20.3 per cent, whether he intends to propose new restrictions to parliament with a view to putting a stop to this extraordinary growing indebtedness?

[English]

Mr. Andras: Mr. Speaker, it is known, of course, that the debt will increase this year. I would point out to hon. members that as a percentage of the economy, or as a percentage of