

ly, can the Prime Minister advise what they will be exploring? We have been trying to find that out for a couple of months. Before the Prime Minister leaves, will he advise us what the government is trying to reach a consensus for and who will be looking after it in his absence.

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the meetings that are going on are, of course, going on under my direction. I am the one who has invited the various representatives of the labour, business and agricultural marketing sectors to meet with groups of ministers. I again issued some invitations recently. The meetings will be going on while I am away.

INFLATION—REASON MINISTER OF FINANCE CONTINUES TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH PROGRAM SEEKING CONSENSUS OF VARIOUS GROUPS

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I will direct my supplementary question to the Minister of Finance who has the reputation of being an honest man. I wish to ask him very bluntly why he lends his name and reputation to such a farce and why he continues to accept the responsibility when the government treats his responsibility for his department with such contempt.

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I will be glad to tell the hon. member why, although two weeks ago tomorrow we had a fairly thorough exchange on this just after Orders of the Day. I need not recall to the hon. gentleman what was said because we were parties to that conversation, but I suggest to hon. members that it would be useful if they would look up those pages and see how fully I treated the answer at that time.

● (1430)

Basically, the government has rejected as an antidote against inflation a deflationary posture in terms of Draconian monetary and fiscal policies which would provoke massive unemployment in this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): We reject, as I think the Canadian people appear to have rejected, a compulsory system of income and price controls. The alternative before the country is for governments at all levels and all segments of the economy—business, labour, agriculture, the professions, owners of property—to seek some consensus voluntarily to moderate our demands on the economy. The hon. gentleman has often said that in his view inflation is the No. 1 problem in this country. I hope we can count on his co-operation in dealing with it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INFLATION—REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT STATE PROPOSALS FOR COUNTERACTING

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. The Minister of

Oral Questions

Agriculture on national television was quoted as saying that at the conference he attended recently in Toronto dealing with the question of inflation they were looking for good ideas. Will the minister indicate whether at that meeting he or his colleagues offered any ideas on behalf of the government as to how inflation might be curbed in this country?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, we have been looking to the opposition for quite some time and that's why we are going out to other places.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Whelan: I did say in that interview following the meetings that if one good idea came from these meetings, the effort would be worth while. These people are very appreciative of the fact that we are meeting with them, and this exchange of ideas may help us do an even better job of fighting inflation than we are doing at the present time—and we are doing one of the best jobs in the whole world as far as that goes right now.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stevens: I take it from the minister's answer, then, that there are certainly no ideas being offered from the government side at this conference inasmuch as he says he is looking for the opposition to supply the ideas.

Mr. Whelan: I said they seem to have run out of ideas because they haven't given us any that are workable so far. There is input both ways. They make suggestions to us and we make suggestions to them.

Mr. Stevens: The Minister of Agriculture said that they made suggestions at these meetings. That was my first question. Would he tell the House what those suggestions were?

Mr. Whelan: We have agreed with these people that everything would be in camera until the meetings are over.

Some hon. Members: Oh!

An hon. Member: A secret anti-inflation policy!

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PUBLIC SERVICE

STRIKE OF GENERAL LABOUR AND TRADES GROUP—
GOVERNMENT POLICY ON PAYING WAGES COMPARABLE TO
THOSE IN PRIVATE SECTOR

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the President of Treasury Board. Since in both the private and the public sector the wage demands workers are making are principally related to the high rate of inflation, has the government abandoned its traditional principle of paying its employees wages and salaries comparable with those paid in the private sector and, if not, why has it rejected the legitimate claim of the general labour and trades group who are asking not even