

*Inquiries of the Ministry***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD****THE CANADIAN ECONOMY****INFLATION—USE OF SANCTIONS IN DEPARTURES FROM PRICING CRITERIA**

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): I am happy to see the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs in the House today, Mr. Speaker, because I tried to get some information from the Minister of Finance yesterday and he did not seem to know too much about the subject. I should like to ask the minister this question. In the event of an agreement being reached at the forthcoming conference with regard to pricing criteria to be followed by Canadian firms during 1970, is it the intention of the government to use sanctions in cases where the Prices and Incomes Commission reports a departure from those criteria by a Canadian firm?

Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): As the Minister of Finance said yesterday, we are working in very close harmony with the Prices and Incomes Commission. I think the Minister of Finance answered that question yesterday.

Mr. Benson: You just did not understand the answer.

Mr. Stanfield: I understand a snow job when I see it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: Am I to understand from the answer of the minister that the Chairman of the Prices and Incomes Commission did not have the approval of the government when he said that in the case of departures from the criteria established, should an accord be reached, it was the intention of the commission to ask the government for sanctions?

Mr. Basford: I think the Leader of the Opposition is misrepresenting the statement made by the Chairman of the Prices and Incomes Commission. It is his hope, and it is our hope, that the program of restraint he is endeavouring to work out will be as effective as possible, and it is our intention as a government to make it as effective as possible. In this I hope we shall have the co-operation of the hon. gentleman.

Mr. Stanfield: Just one other question, Mr. Speaker. Would it be correct to assume that the program of the government as far as this

[Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale).]

announcement is concerned is still one of purely voluntary restraint and that there is no question of government sanctions being involved? Is that correct?

Mr. Basford: The Chairman announced yesterday that a meeting will be held to work out procedures by which a program of price restraint can prevail across the country.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Thomas M. Bell (Saint John-Lancaster): A supplementary question to the Minister of Finance in connection with this matter of restraint or lack of restraint. Bearing in mind the recently disclosed information that the Minister of Finance led all cabinet ministers in travel expenses at \$10,000 a year, can the hon. gentleman say if that is where he gets his ideas about living on \$30 a week?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): The Public Accounts Committee will have full opportunity to question the legitimacy of departmental expenditures, including travelling expenses. I believe the people of Canada wish to be informed concerning matters of interest to them. Indeed, it should be the duty of ministers to visit various parts of Canada to keep them so informed.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have doubts about whether the original question was in order. The minister was allowed to reply to it in any event, but I do not think supplementary questions on that subject should be allowed.

INCREASE IN AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE RATES

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): May I direct a question to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs regarding the announcement by the insurance companies that they intend to raise automobile insurance rates by approximately 13 per cent with effect from February 1 in most areas? Since the minister is the custodian of the rights of consumers I should like to ask him whether he has looked into the question of possible collusion in view of the fact that all the companies seem to be applying an increase of approximately the same amount at the same time. Has the minister looked into this matter and can he indicate what action he proposes to take?

Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): The situation relative