

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Speaker: The minister may give a brief reply to the question of privilege.

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): On the question of privilege, I should indicate that at that point the government was not considering a change. Furthermore, I think there is often a great deal of irresponsibility in the questions asked in the House whereby members rise and ask questions in the House to which they expect answers on orders of the day on the basis of which speculators could make millions of dollars.

Mr. Speaker: I suggest we should now return to the question period.

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY**INFLATION—INTRODUCTION OF MANDATORY CONTROLS**

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): I have a question for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. In view of the demand by his former cabinet colleague, the hon. member for Trinity, for firmer controls on the cost-price spiral, and in view of the very obvious fact that the voluntary controls are not working, is the minister now considering mandatory controls to stop the rising cost of living?

Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): May I say, following the remarks of the Minister of Finance, that if that were to be announced it would not be announced in the question period.

EFFECT OF GOVERNMENT ANTI-INFLATION POLICY

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): I have a question for the right hon. Prime Minister as I would not want him to feel lonely and left out of affairs today. I should like to welcome him back and to tell him that the hunt lost something of its savour in his absence.

When he was interviewed by the press in Vancouver on Friday, in answer to a question he said:

Unemployment is an undesirable effect of the government's anti-inflation policy, but the desirable effects more than balance this disadvantage.

Was he referring to the advantage of the increase in the cost of living that took place in the last month, which was at the rate of 7.2 per cent a year, one-third higher than the rate of increase in the last ten months?

[Mr. Woolliams.]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest that the question as asked is in the form of an argument, and in those terms it is not acceptable.

Mr. Hees: May I rephrase it, Mr. Speaker, because we would like to know to what the Prime Minister was referring and what advantage he thinks there might be in his anti-inflationary policy. Could we have an answer? The Prime Minister says no, he has no answer. Obviously, he does not want to answer because he has none.

LABOUR RELATIONS**WEST COAST TOWBOAT STRIKE—PRESENT POSITION OF NEGOTIATIONS**

Mr. Thomas S. Barnett (Comox-Alberni): My question is addressed to the Minister of Labour. Can he report to the House on any developments that may have taken place over the weekend leading to a settlement of the westcoast towboat strike?

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour): I can add very little to what I said at the end of last week, other than that both parties are meeting again today and will be bringing their final proposals to the bargaining table which is presided over by Mr. Kelly of the conciliation branch. Based on whether both sides are reasonable, an early settlement could be reached. However, if one or the other side proves to be unreasonable and inflexible, I will have no choice later this week but to make a fuller statement in the House and place the blame on the party that refuses to co-operate in settling what I think is an unnecessary strike.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS**INCREASE IN PRICE OF MILK**

Mr. Barry Mather (Surrey): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Having in mind the increase in the price of milk being announced at this time by some major companies, is the minister's department looking into the situation?

Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): I am not sure to which price increases the hon. member is referring. The Prices and Incomes Commission is examining some increases in milk prices, and so has the combines investigation branch. If the hon. member would indicate to me the particular increase about which he is concerned I could be more definitive.