

to work, can the minister say what steps are being taken so that we can retain these very valuable employees?

Hon. Robert Stanbury (Minister without Portfolio): Mr. Speaker, there has been no indication to me of any such move on the part of the employees. We are very hopeful, of course, that we will be able to retain this very talented staff if sufficient work is committed by departments. As the hon. member knows, we act as a contractor for departments, and to the full extent that work can be committed we would like to retain staff.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, will the minister look into the point I raised, and will he also look into the question whether or not work that might be done by this staff is being let out by contract?

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REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION

SASKATCHEWAN, WESTERN CANADA—INQUIRY AS TO NEW PROGRAMS

Mr. R. R. Southam (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion who, according to the roster, is supposed to be in the House. In his absence I direct my question to the Acting Prime Minister. In light of current statements by the Premier of Saskatchewan, will the government be stating any new positions with regard to regional expansion programs in Saskatchewan and western Canada and, if so, when?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I will direct that question to my colleague.

Mr. Southam: Mr. Speaker, when the minister directs my question to his colleague, would he also ask him whether the minister has replied to the charge by the premier of Saskatchewan that the federal government has been sitting on the initiation of an approved grant to a food processing complex for Saskatchewan and, if so, what was the response?

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INDUSTRY

CONSTRUCTION—INITIATION BY GOVERNMENT OF LONG-TERM MONETARY AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Mr. Walter C. Carter (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. In light of the warning by the president of the Canadian Construction Association that the basic problems of the construction industry relate to the widespread swing in construction activity—a feast or famine syndrome—is the government going to construct a long-term monetary and development policy for the construction industry in order to avoid further wide swings in federal policy toward this industry, as recommended by the Economic Council of Canada?

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member will recognize, I am sure, that the question is put in wide terms and is one of very general scope. I wonder whether it is in order to ask it in those terms. Perhaps the hon. member might like to cut down the scope of the question so that the Chair can accept it in other terms.

Mr. Carter: Yes, Mr. Speaker. To put my question simply, in view of the problems encountered by the Canadian construction industry and the statement made by the president of that association, can the Minister of Finance say whether the government intends to make any monetary or other policy changes to help the construction industry, as recommended by the Economic Council of Canada?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I do not think that this is a matter to be determined by monetary changes. As far as federal government construction is concerned, we have for the past several years been working out long-range construction programs so that one does not get the dips that usually take place and which bother the construction industry very much. One of their main problems is that when people decide that they are going to economize, or they believe the market is falling, one of the first things they cut down on is capital construction. As the economy goes up and down, capital construction feels it very severely.

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INQUIRY OF THE MINISTRY

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Manpower and Immigration. Since the Minister of Supply and Services will be addressing a public meeting in Southey, Saskatchewan, this coming Saturday, would the minister be prepared to substitute himself on that occasion and discuss with the people of that area why he and the hon. member for Assiniboia proposed to the Postmaster General the closure of a post office in that area?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

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FINANCE

REQUEST FOR STATEMENT ON REPORTS OF HOUSE AND SENATE COMMITTEES ON TAX REFORM WHITE PAPER TO ASSIST INDUSTRY

Mr. Thomas M. Bell (Saint John-Lancaster): I have a question for the Minister of Finance. Since several pulp and paper companies are withholding expansion plans in Canada, according to the Economic Council, would the minister now consider making some sort of temporary reply to the Senate and House committee reports on the white paper on tax reform in order to clear up the indefiniteness as to the financial position of the country?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): I do not think that has anything to do with the question of the pulp and paper industry expanding at the present time.