

of a year between the minister, his officials, officials of the Canadian Transport Commission, and the premiers and their officials from western Canada with respect to the alleged discriminatory freight rates now in effect in the captive freight rate areas in the west, will the minister under motions report to the House before the summer adjournment as to what progress or determination has been arrived at with respect to this serious problem?

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Transport): I would be pleased to do so if I expected that there would be definitive information by that time. My own feeling is that there will not. However, I can advise the House that just this week I received further representations from the province of Manitoba. Discussions with officials in Saskatchewan have been completed, and I assume that after discussions with Manitoba officials there will be meetings with officials of the province of Alberta. So I do not believe much would be accomplished by a statement at this time.

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POST OFFICE

SUGGESTED RESUMPTION OF SIX-DAY MAIL DELIVERY

Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address my question to the Postmaster General. Now that he has obtained the approval of Parliament to increase first class postal rates in Canada commencing July 1 and again in January next, is it his intention to return to the six-day delivery of mail so that Canadians will receive the service to which they are entitled?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Côté (Postmaster General): No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Orders of the day.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In accordance with a request made by the other side I would like to notify the House that the government will be laying on the table, not later than Friday, a proposed draft Order in Council relating to the new ministry of state for urban affairs and housing and a notice of motion relating thereto.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed, from Tuesday, June 22, consideration of the motion of Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance) that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, the amendment thereto of Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West) (page 7229) and the amendment to the amendment of Mr. Saltzman (page 7234).

The Budget—Mr. Blair

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I believe that when we adjourned yesterday the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Blair) had the floor.

Mr. D. Gordon Blair (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, yesterday as I listened to the address of the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) I was reminded of an editorial which appeared in one of the financial papers at the commencement of 1970. It was written at a time when the official opposition had decided to run in the wake of the well informed criticism of the white paper which was then developing.

The editorial gave credit to the official opposition for its political acumen in choosing the white paper as a target but raised a serious question by way of caution. It asked the official opposition and its leader what would happen if that target were removed. Of course, that is what has happened and we now see the sense of frustration, disappointment and confusion which shines through the comments which thus far the official opposition have made on this major budget proposal. They look like the mighty guns of Singapore which, when the battle was joined, were pointing the wrong way and firing at the wrong target.

There was a dichotomy in the address of the hon. member for Edmonton West. He seemed unable to make up his mind whether to take credit for the good things which are disclosed in this budget or to retreat into the traditional opposition posture of criticizing everything which the government has proposed. And at the end of his remarks I regret to say that his attitude was unclear and the issue appeared to be unresolved in his mind. But as is so often the case, whatever may be said by the official spokesmen of the opposition they are disconcerted and undermined by their colleague, the distinguished member for Prince Edward-Hastings (Mr. Hees). He at least has recognized the wisdom of this budget. He has recognized its immense popularity. He has predicted an election. I understand from the press that he is wagering large amounts of a valuable fluid in support of his prediction. Perhaps the caution should be offered to him that the budget does not propose any reduction in the tax on spirits.

From the NDP we have had what might be expected to be their accustomed response. They must look askance at anything which is popular, at anything which relieves large sections of the population from taxation, and they have looked upon this budget with their accustomed attitude of moral disdain. A remarkable phrase was uttered by the hon. member for Waterloo (Mr. Saltzman) in his speech yesterday. He described the budget as being "a political budget beyond the point of decency." All of us know that the real translation of those words is that this is a popular budget beyond the reach of his ill-tempered criticism.

Against all the evidence, the NDP will continue to say that this is a budget which is oppressive against the little man in this country, and favours large interests. It is significant that in elaborating this argument yesterday the hon. member for Waterloo, as recorded at page 7231