

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Lawrence:** Mr. Speaker, I was not referring to disposable income; I was referring to purchasing power. There is a difference. May I direct my supplementary to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. Because the indices covering real purchasing power show the real squeeze on the people of this country, would the minister be good enough to consider asking Statistics Canada to produce these statistics monthly instead of every six months?

**Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce):** Mr. Speaker, I would be prepared to draw to the attention of Statistics Canada the representation of the hon. member.

[Later:]

REQUEST THAT HOUSE DEBATE LOSS LEADER PRACTICE  
OF FOOD CHAINS

**Mr. W. C. Scott (Victoria-Haliburton):** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. In light of continued high food costs, will the minister bring forward for debate the subject of loss leaders and the predatory behaviour of the food chain giants, as the last study for criteria in respect of loss leadering was made in the mid-1950s?

**Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, this is something the House could certainly look at in the course of the debate on and consideration of the bill to implement stage one of our new policy on competition.

GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT AND RATE OF INFLATION—  
AVAILABILITY OF FORECASTS BY MINISTER OF FINANCE  
FOR 1974

**Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance, who I believe is to meet with the provincial Ministers of Finance on January 24 or 25, or perhaps on both days. Is it his intention to present at that meeting forecasts for the year 1974 with regard to growth in the gross national product and the consequential financial effects of this for the government of Canada and the provinces, and also with regard to the anticipated or projected rate of inflation for 1974?

**Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, over the past two or three years, at these annual meetings of finance ministers held for the purpose of comparing the budgetary forecasts and fiscal postures of the provinces and the federal government, as well as the monetary posture of the federal government, it has been customary, and we shall again follow the practice next January, to exchange on a confidential basis views and forecasts on a number of items based on a range of probabilities. That will be done again on a frank and confidential basis.

**Mr. Stanfield:** Then the minister is prepared to say that he has forecasts which he will be presenting to the finance ministers of the provinces with regard to his expectations as to the GNP, the rate of inflation and related matters,

[Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton).]

but he is not prepared to make this information available to the House?

**Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton):** That is not the way I put it, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Fairweather:** The minister himself used the word "confidential".

**Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton):** Yes, I did. This is done by all governments in order to achieve, prior to their budgetary presentations, prior to my presentation in the House of a budget and prior to the provincial Ministers of Finance presenting their budgets, a confidential overview of the economy. That is why the information is kept confidential. We do this so as not to trespass on the rights of the respective legislatures or of parliament. One of the difficulties, of course, in forecasting inflation next year, and I have pointed this out to the House, has to do with worldwide factors which we must consider, entailing now uncertainties in the pricing of fuel, world commodities and agricultural products.

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## AGRICULTURE

### GOVERNMENT PLANS TO ENCOURAGE PRODUCTION

**Mr. H. W. Danforth (Kent-Essex):** Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Minister of Agriculture. As both the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Agriculture have indicated that one of their key policies in order to stop the inflated price of food in Canada is increased Canadian production, and as it is now apparent that not only have prices not been curtailed but Canadians are producing even less than is necessary to meet domestic demand in certain products, including butter and cheese with the closing of Canadian cheese factories and creameries, can the minister indicate if the government proposes to bring forward any new initiatives in order to encourage greater domestic production?

● (1530)

**Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture):** Mr. Speaker, the premise of the hon. member's question may be right as it pertains to some agricultural products. However, the vast bulk of agricultural production is increasing in Canada. We outlined in September to the provincial ministers and in ongoing meetings since that time—we will be meeting early in January again to finalize them—programs to stabilize agricultural income in Canada. I am sure this will guarantee an increase in production when we pass the energy allocation bill, which will enable people to plan their production because we will have energy for them.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The Chair will recognize the hon. member for Kent-Essex and then the hon. member for Fraser Valley West.

**Mr. Danforth:** Mr. Speaker, perhaps the minister will dispense with his verbosity and give me a direct answer to this question. In view of the fact that production of all commodities in Canada is seriously affected by the