

*Inquiries of the Ministry*

[Translation]

**NATURAL RESOURCES****GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTION TO PROSPECTING IN NORTHWESTERN QUEBEC AND NORTHEASTERN ONTARIO**

**Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion.

Does the Canadian government make any contribution to prospection of new mining resources in northwestern Quebec and north-eastern Ontario?

**Mr. Speaker:** I feel the hon. member's question should normally be placed on the order paper, but if the House agrees the minister might perhaps reply.

**Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion):** Mr. Speaker, I shall have to inquire from the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, and perhaps also from the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce as to such prospection as might be carried out, and probably the minister under whose jurisdiction the matter comes will be able to reply to the hon. member.

**Mr. Caouette:** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. Has SOQUEN, the Quebec agency, already applied for government aid for specific development.

**Mr. Speaker:** The supplementary question could be placed on the order paper or dealt with at the time of adjournment.

[English]

**THE CANADIAN ECONOMY****INFLATION—SUGGESTED REIMPOSITION OF CEILING ON BANK INTEREST RATES**

**Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Has-tings):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Acting Prime Minister. As the statement by Dr. Young during the weekend about the 6 per cent wage guideline makes it clear that the government intends to keep the cost of labour as low as possible in its fight against inflation, is it the intention of the government to take similar steps to keep another very important cost of production, the cost of working capital, as low as possible by reimposing a ceiling on the interest rates charged on commercial loans at a level considerably below the levels of today, which are permitting the chartered banks to register record profits since the 6 per cent ceiling was removed?

[Mr. McIlraith.]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member's question contains a number of statements. He knows that a question should be a question and not a statement, but to the limited extent that the hon. member's intervention is a question perhaps it might be replied to by the minister.

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I think the question that was originally put to me by the hon. member was whether the government was taking steps to bring down the cost of interest on working capital. As a result of the government's success in dealing with inflation there has been a notable reduction in interest rates, and if we continue to be successful interest rates will continue to come down, but if the hon. member wants to encourage inflation on the one hand and hopes for low interest rates on the other he will be disappointed.

**Mr. Hees:** Mr. Speaker, as the Minister knows, I have been pressing the government for a long time to keep costs down, and I would simply—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Hees:** —I would ask him—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Would the hon. member ask a question?

**Mr. Hees:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I would ask him why it is that the government feels perfectly well satisfied to impose very stringent guidelines or restrictions on the earnings of labour when it refuses to impose any restrictions whatever on the earnings of capital?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member's question is argumentative.

**INFLATION—INVESTIGATION OF BANK PROFITS BY PRICES AND INCOMES COMMISSION**

**Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands):** Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Acting Prime Minister who has been speaking about the necessity for maintaining guidelines. In view of the fact revealed in Friday's reports that the chartered banks have chalked up an increase in their profits of 27.7 per cent for the first six months of this year, following a 26.5 per cent increase last year over the previous year, is the Prices and Incomes Commission taking any steps to investigate these high profits particularly in view of the fact that the criteria the commission established do not deal with the profits of banks?