

Oral Questions

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, could the Minister of Finance be a little more out in the open about the kind of game he may be up to. Could he tell the House what he is trying to do. Is he simply going to the people in organized labour and business and asking them to put forward a policy for the government to follow to fight inflation? In view of the 12 per cent rate of inflation and the attitude of the government, what is the minister proposing? Is this just another game or another kind of a stall for several months? What is the minister up to?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Would you repeat the question.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with the Leader of the Opposition that as this process goes forward we will be wanting to explain it more definitely than the hon. gentleman was able to explain his compulsory system earlier in the year.

Mr. Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the Prime Minister or the Minister of Finance could place before the House their position and their policy. Is it too much to ask the Minister of Finance what the policy of the government is with regard to finance? Is the Minister of Finance totally incapable and unable to place before the House his policy and are the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister content simply to try to hide behind some kind of a screen and forget about everything else.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I spent an hour and a half on budget night being as frank as I could with the hon. gentleman about what our policy is.

INFLATION—GOVERNMENT ACTION TO PROVIDE RELIEF FOR CONSUMERS

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is for the Minister of Finance who behaves like the Grinch who stole Christmas. In light of the consultation that is supposed to be taking place, and in view of the fact that in the midst of this consultation food prices continue to escalate with a 15 per cent increase this year and another anticipated 15 per cent increase next year, and in view of the undertaking given by the present government that it would not allow any disruptive increases in food prices, I ask the minister what immediate steps he proposes to take to provide relief to Canadians now and not somewhere down the road when a consensus is finally achieved.

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I know how attractive it is to the hon. member to seek instant solutions, but we have described to him that inflation is far more deeply imbedded into our economy and to the world economies for that type of solution to be obtainable. We have set it out in terms of the combination of fiscal and monetary policy, in terms of supply and tariff policies and in terms of increasing the agricultural production here in this country.

[Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton).]

REQUEST FOR REINSTATEMENT OF FLUID MILK SUBSIDY

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, in view of the 8.6 per cent increase in the price of fluid milk may I ask the minister if the government will now reinstitute the consumer price subsidy so that this fairly essential element in the diet of most Canadians can be lower in price or that the price can be held at the present level?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, my colleague the Minister of Agriculture described in the House how the provincial ministers requested that removal.

POSSIBLE ADOPTION OF INCOMES POLICY AND WEALTH TAX TO ACHIEVE EQUITY—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance concerning his approach in trying to get some kind of consensus with the various sectors in the community in respect of dealing with the economic situation. Would the minister give us an assurance, in view of the fact that he made no specific proposal himself, that if this government does come up with some kind of an incomes policy it will duplicate what the governments in Great Britain and Sweden have done with similar kinds of policies by introducing simultaneously a wealth tax to achieve some kind of equity and offer assurances that if you have an incomes policy the position of average and low income people will improve.

● (1510)

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Without wishing to cast any reflection on what other governments may be doing, although I will take the hon. member's suggestion into consideration, I am not sure I would want to accept for the moment as my model or the model for this country the British economy.

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CONSUMER AFFAIRS

SUGAR—GOVERNMENT ACTION TO REDUCE PRICE

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Whenever the Minister of Finance does not want to deal with a point, he brings up some irrelevancy.

I will direct my question to his colleague, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. In his absence I will address it to the Prime Minister. The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs said over a month ago that his department was working on a proposal that would bring some rationality to the sugar industry with the intention of bringing down the price of sugar to consumers in Canada. Given the impact of sugar prices on so many food items, could the Prime Minister tell the House when we might expect some concrete proposal from the government in this area?

Mr. Norman A. Cafik (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr.