

Inquiries of the Ministry

the Minister of Finance respecting the position that Canada will take before the Group of Ten and the International Monetary Fund. Is the Prime Minister not prepared to recognize that this is a matter of importance and concern to all the people of Canada, and would he not consider it appropriate that the people of Canada should have some opportunity to express an opinion about the stand to which the responsible minister may commit this country at those meetings?

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we hope very much that the people of this country, and particularly the opposition, will take a stand.

Mr. Stanfield: That is not an answer to my question, Mr. Speaker. I asked the Prime Minister a perfectly straightforward and polite question, if I may say so. Is it not in the public interest, in the Prime Minister's opinion, that the people of this country should know in advance and have an opportunity to express an opinion in advance with respect to the position to which the government proposes to commit this country with regard to international exchange rates and the whole international exchange system?

Mr. Trudeau: No, Mr. Speaker, I do not think it is a very serious nor constructive proposal unless the Leader of the Opposition is suggesting that we debate in advance the whole range of positions which will be taken by the various members of the Group of Ten and all the different hypotheses which would lead our Minister of Finance to give different answers. I think the suggestion is completely unrealistic; it is not possible for the Minister of Finance to state before leaving exactly what he will do and to have the opposition debate it and have the country give its opinion on it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: Is it the view of the Prime Minister that the government knows best and that the rest of us have to be stuck with whatever it commits us to?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest to hon. members that we are getting into a debate at this point. I gather there are a number of members seeking the floor for the purpose of asking supplementaries. We might have two or three supplementaries and then go on to the next subject.

MAINTENANCE OF CANADIAN DOLLAR BELOW PAR WITH UNITED STATES DOLLAR

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): I have a supplementary question for the Prime Minister. As the government earlier committed itself to a Canadian dollar that was neither unrealistically high nor unrealistically low, is the government now prepared to take whatever steps are necessary to keep our dollar below par with the United States dollar?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): I do not admit the premises of the question, Mr. Speaker.

[Mr. Stanfield.]

MAINTENANCE OF CANADIAN DOLLAR BELOW PAR WITH UNITED STATES DOLLAR—REPRESENTATIONS BY MINISTER TO GROUP OF TEN

Mr. J. P. Nowlan (Annapolis Valley): Mr. Speaker, since the Prime Minister was kind enough to admit that this is a matter of concern to all Canadians, and since he is not going to inform us of the detailed plans, objectives and strategy of the Minister of Finance, can he tell the House in a general way whether the Minister of Finance has the objective of maintaining the Canadian dollar under the United States dollar and whether he will be trying to enlist the support of the European Economic Community and the Group of Ten in this regard before the International Monetary Fund meeting?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I believe that not so many days ago the Minister of Finance himself said in the House that if he had the choice he would like to see the Canadian dollar rate lower rather than higher but that he may not be able to control all the monetary forces at work. He has stated his position which is that of the government.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

PROPOSED AMCHITKA NUCLEAR TEST—SUGGESTED PERSONAL APPROACH BY PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT NIXON

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, in view of reports that President Nixon is reconsidering the possibility of a nuclear test at Amchitka, against which the Canadian government has expressed itself on many occasions, and in view of suggestions in Washington that a further representation by Canada may have an important influence in President Nixon's consideration of the matter, would the Prime Minister make a personal approach to the President of the United States asking him to cancel the blast which is scheduled for some time next month?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I attempted to answer this question last week. I said I would not rule out that possibility. If I felt it was necessary to do so I would take my cap in hand—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: —and go to the President of the United States.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I would hope that this time the Prime Minister would leave his cap at home. One can make a trip to Washington, or a telephone call, without cap in hand.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, hon. members opposite should have learned by now that shouting will not get them anywhere.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Would the hon. member kindly ask his question.