

Oral Questions

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: As there is not unanimous consent, the motion therefore cannot be put.

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● (1410)

[English]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

TABLING OF EIGHTEENTH REPORT OF CLERK OF PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has laid upon the table the eighteenth report of the Clerk of Petitions presented by the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) and finds that it meets the requirements of the Standings Orders as to form.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

FINANCE

REQUEST FOR ESTIMATE OF BUDGETARY DEFICIT FOR THIS YEAR

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance arising out of the tabling yesterday of supplementary estimates in the order of about \$1¼ billion. In view of the additional spending and the further supplementary estimates that we will probably receive in due course, will the minister tell the House now what his estimate is of the budgetary deficit for the current fiscal year? I ask him whether he will tell the House because I know he must have that information?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the best judgment we have at this time is that it will be between \$5 billion and \$6 billion.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Diefenbaker: What a government!

FORECAST OF TOTAL EXPENDITURES

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, since my hon. friend the President of the Treasury Board has got into this I should like to put a question to him. In view of the forecast of expenditures for the current year, which was made in June by the previous Minister of Finance of approximately \$29 billion, and in view of the supplementary estimates yesterday which bring the total estimates we have received to date to about \$30 billion, a billion more than was forecast by the former minister of finance in June, is the minister still forecasting total expenditures for this year at that same level?

[Mr. Speaker.]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, when I tabled the blue book in February this year I said that the total expenditures this year would be less than 16 per cent above the total expenditures of last year. It is going to be as predicted because those supplementary estimates are quite substantial. There will be another set tabled before the end of the year but all that will be within the forecast we made in February.

Mr. Stanfield: A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. That kind of penalty killing and skating around may be acceptable in some quarters. It is the kind of evasion that has destroyed the credibility of this government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: In view of these evasions and the figures that have been quoted, may I ask the President of the Treasury Board if he would agree that what he said on October 30 in this House, that we are sticking by the budget predictions of June, should be changed to say that it is really the Canadian people who are getting stuck?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

NUMBER AND AMOUNT OF FURTHER SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES—RESTRAINT OF EXPENDITURES WITHIN AMOUNT OF INCREASE IN GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Finance. Would the minister advise this House if in fact there will be one or two further sets of supplementary estimates filed with respect to this fiscal year? Can he indicate the magnitude of the amount covered by these two estimates?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (President of Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I just told the Leader of the Opposition that before the end of the fiscal year there would be another set of supplementary estimates. I do not expect to have two more sets before the end of the fiscal year.

Mr. Baldwin: A supplementary question. These advocates of fiscal kleptomania who sit across from us have now come to the situation where they are exceeding the 15 per cent referred to by my head-shaking friend over there, the President of the Treasury Board. As the gross national product this year will not increase more than 11 per cent, will the President of the Treasury Board or the Minister of Finance—I am impartial as to which minister answers—indicate to this House when they intend to restrain their expenditures within the limits of the increase of the gross national product?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I notice that as much as half, if not more, of the expenditures involved in the supplementary estimates tabled yesterday were for the oil price subsidy, medicare and the defence budget. I take it the hon. gentleman's opposition also extends to those programs, and I am happy to note it on the record.

Mr. Baldwin: Answer the question; we are not running the government, but we ought to be.