

Oral Questions

whose consensus is necessary in respect of the business community for example. Could the minister clarify what segments of the business community must be part of the consensus understanding insofar as he is concerned or in his view. Would the approval, for example, of certain business associations be sufficient in order to constitute an agreement so far as he is concerned?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, obviously one wants to get as wide a range as possible. There are three task forces or technical committees now working, one with labour through the Canadian Labour Congress, another with business in three main areas, primarily responsible for resource, manufacturing and service industries, and a third now will be by way of liaison with provincial governments as a result of the conference of last week.

INFLATION—NECESSITY FOR UNANIMITY OF ALL SEGMENTS OF ECONOMY IN SEEKING CONSENSUS ON RESTRAINT

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, is the position of the minister that he will have to have unanimity from those being consulted with regard to business, and unanimity also with regard to those being consulted on the part of labour before he has something on which he can move forward?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I said to the hon. gentleman on a couple of occasions that in the arrangements being worked out mutually obviously one wants a general feeling that the targets specifically set are those which in general receive the approval of the various aspects of the economy. One could hardly hope of course for unanimity in a free parliamentary democracy but one would hope that the general view of the various areas of the economy would support what is announced by the government.

INFLATION—TERMS OF AGREEMENT WITH FARM SECTOR IN SEEKING CONSENSUS ON RESTRAINT

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): I have one final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. If the minister does not have unanimity then he will have some who do not go along with his proposal. Would the minister tell the House what terms of agreement the government is seeking from the farm sector, having indicated that prices in general terms would not go up unless costs go up. What terms of agreement would the government be seeking with regard to the farm community in pricing?

● (1410)

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, at the meeting the Minister of Agriculture and I and other ministers held with representatives of the National Farmers Union and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, we were concerned primarily, as they were, in the stabilization of prices of major farm products. In that respect, that would be the objective we would be trying to achieve with regard to farmers. Obviously, there is no attempt to try to limit the price of farm produce at the farm gate because of the necessity in this country to

[Mr. Stanfield.]

stabilize food prices by encouraging farm production, and also as a country contributing toward relief of hunger in the world.

INFLATION—PURPOSE OF PRIME MINISTER IN FORMING GROUP OF SEVEN ECONOMIC ADVISERS

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): My question is for the Prime Minister. Would he indicate whether the formation of the group of seven economic advisers was partly to advise the Prime Minister in relation to the consensus talks that have been going on and, more generally, could the Prime Minister explain the purpose of assembling the group of seven advisory economists since the group only met three times in the two years of its existence?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the answer to the first part of the question is no, and to the second part my answer is that I take advice when and where I can get it.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

INFLATION—REQUEST FOR VERIFICATION OF MR. BRETON'S STATEMENT GROUP OF SEVEN ECONOMIC ADVISERS DOOMED FROM START

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): In view of Mr. Albert Breton's reported statement to the CBC, Mr. Albert Breton being the chairman of the group of seven, that the committee was doomed from the start because of opposition among senior civil servants in Ottawa and the Minister of Finance, would the Prime Minister indicate whether in fact Mr. Breton was right in his observation?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I cannot even confirm that he said what he is quoted as having said.

INFLATION—POSSIBILITY OF STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER ON DISBANDING OF GROUP OF SEVEN ECONOMIC ADVISERS

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): My supplementary question is again to the Prime Minister. In view of another committee member's statement to the CBC that the Prime Minister will be making a formal statement concerning the disbanding of the group of seven and that he hopes the Prime Minister would put the whole business on the record—

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

Mr. Stevens: —would the Prime Minister indicate whether in fact he would be making a statement to the House concerning the function and disbanding of the group of seven?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): No, Mr. Speaker, I will not be making a statement about the group of seven, except on certain occasions when I make reference to those great painters who honoured Canada with their great talent.