

*Inquiries of the Ministry*IMPORT RESTRICTIONS—PLANS FOR SPRING
PLANTING

On the orders of the day:

Mr. G. K. FRASER (Peterborough West): I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Agriculture or the Minister of Finance. Does the government intend to announce the future plans regarding the importation of lettuce, celery and vegetables, so that the vegetable growers and hothouse men can plan for the future and the needs of the Canadian people? Their vegetable seeds for the spring planting must be ordered at once.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order.

Mr. FRASER: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important question because the vegetable men have to order their vegetable seeds within the next month.

Mr. GRAYDON: These people are not interested in the vegetable growers; one can easily see that.

Mr. FRASER: Mr. Speaker, may I not have an answer to that question?

Mr. GRAYDON: He should have an answer to the question. It has to do with urgent business of everyone.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order.

Hon. DOUGLAS ABBOTT (Minister of Finance): I always like to answer questions. A delegation from the vegetable growers came to see me this morning. That may be what has prompted my hon. friend's question.

Mr. GRAYDON: There is nothing wrong with that.

Mr. FRASER: No.

Mr. ABBOTT: I discussed the matter of fresh vegetables with them. I pointed out that the import restrictions on these vegetables are part of our exchange conservation program, essentially temporary in their nature, but that for obvious reasons it was impossible for me or for anyone else to say how long it would be necessary to keep these restrictions on.

Mr. FRASER: My question was prompted by a letter which I wrote the Department of Agriculture on January 5.

CANADA—NEWFOUNDLAND

REQUEST FOR STATEMENT ON ACTION OF
NEWFOUNDLAND NATIONAL CONVENTION

On the orders of the day:

Mr. GORDON GRAYDON (Peel): I should like to direct a question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. In view of the interest across Canada in our negotiations

[Mr. Abbott.]

with Newfoundland, and the fact that yesterday its national convention opposed the submission of the confederation plan to the people of Newfoundland, would the government through the Prime Minister or the Secretary of State for External Affairs make a statement to the house so that the country will understand from parliament, rather than from the press so far away, just how the situation now stands, whether or not the door is closed to further negotiations, and the prospect of further confederation discussions?

Right Hon. L. S. ST. LAURENT (Secretary of State for External Affairs): I will examine carefully the terms of the question that has just been asked by the hon. member and endeavour to have some statement made. The hon. member will realize that the Canadian government stated terms which in its opinion would be fair for union and is taking no part whatsoever in presenting those terms to the people of Newfoundland, nor would it venture to do or say anything which might be regarded there as trying to influence the decision of the free people of Newfoundland.

The information we have is that there was a vote against recommending to the government of the United Kingdom the inclusion on the ballot of any question about union with Canada. The information we have is that this national convention was an advisory body and that its decisions were not binding either on the people of Newfoundland or on the United Kingdom government. We have not received any information of decisions taken since the report in the newspapers of the vote in the national convention.

Mr. GRAYDON: I take it from the minister's remarks that the door to further negotiations is not definitely closed.

Mr. ST. LAURENT: No. The offer is still before the people of Newfoundland and before the commission government of Newfoundland.

The national convention has expressed by vote its views, but it is only, as I said, an advisory body and the matter still has to be dealt with by those who have the constitutional responsibility for a decision.

EXCESS PROFITS TAX

INQUIRY WITH RESPECT TO NEWSPAPER REPORT

On the orders of the day:

Mr. J. M. MACDONNELL (Muskoka-Ontario): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address a question to the Minister of Finance of which I have had no chance to give him notice. In view of the report appearing in the press that the Minister of Transport intimated that the government was considering an exten-