

In order to facilitate the task of the delegates to the conference which will soon be held in Victoria, could the Prime Minister ask the Minister of National Health and Welfare to state clearly the views of the federal government on the Castonguay report dealing with powers in social matters before the conference or could he make that statement himself on behalf of the government?

Mr. Speaker: I suppose that the hon. member is suggesting to the Prime Minister or to a government representative that they should make such a statement before the conference. That statement could not be made at this time, but rather on motions.

[English]

PRELIMINARY STUDY OF CONDITIONS BY MINISTER PRIOR TO MINISTERS' CONFERENCE

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. May I ask the Minister of National Health and Welfare whether, in preparation for the conference with the provincial ministers next week, he has conducted any preliminary studies himself as to welfare conditions across the country and as to the adequacy of welfare programs, and has satisfied himself of the extent to which Canadians may be suffering as a result of inadequate welfare programs?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, yes, I have looked at all those matters mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Several hon. members are seeking to ask supplementary questions. Before returning to the subject and recognizing, among others, the hon. member for Fraser Valley West, the hon. member for Charlevoix and the hon. member for Oxford, the Chair will first recognize the hon. member for Portneuf.

[Translation]

The Chair recognizes the hon. member for Portneuf. The House will return to the subject in a moment.

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AGRICULTURE

CANADIAN MINK BREEDERS' ASSOCIATION—REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. Roland Godin (Portneuf): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a question to the hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Did the Canadian Mink Breeders Association make representations recently about its financial difficulties and in the affirmative, does the minister intend to make a statement to the House soon to announce the measures he is considering to help it?

[English]

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I believe representations were made by this association but not recently. I believe they were made about five or six weeks ago. I do not intend to make a statement in the House soon.

Inquiries of the Ministry

[Translation]

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE

REQUEST FOR POSTPONEMENT BY PREMIER THATCHER—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Martial Asselin (Charlevoix): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister.

Will he, as announced in this morning's papers, be taking into consideration the request by the Premier of Saskatchewan for postponement of the Victoria conference?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): I shall certainly be taking that request into consideration, but I am not sure I can accede to it. I have initiated consultations to establish whether it can be done, but it now seems it would be quite difficult at this date to alter arrangements agreed upon concerning the Victoria meeting.

Finally, after my consultations, I shall send a reply to Premier Thatcher and I shall be glad to communicate it to the House.

[English]

Mr. John L. Skoberg (Moose Jaw): A supplementary question. Can the Prime Minister say whether the premier of Saskatchewan was aware of the date of the constitutional conference before he called the provincial election?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps the hon. member is not expecting a reply at this time to the question he has asked.

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WELFARE

ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO PROVINCES BECAUSE OF LAPSE OF SEASONAL UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS

Mr. W. B. Nesbitt (Oxford): I have a question for the Prime Minister. In view of the fact that seasonal unemployment benefits ran out at the end of May and this will involve additional heavy welfare costs for the provinces, is the government considering at the present time giving special assistance to the provinces to meet these extra welfare costs because of the seasonal benefits having expired?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the government's position has not changed since the Minister of Labour dealt with that question some time ago.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES FROM EAST PAKISTAN NOW IN INDIA—CANADIAN INITIATIVE WITHIN COMMONWEALTH OR UNITED NATIONS

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): My question is for the Prime Minister. What initiative is Canada taking within the Commonwealth or the United Nations to bring to a successful conclusion the very serious problem in Pakistan with reference to the possible resettlement of the many millions of refugees now flooding into India?