

Inquiries of the Ministry

prime ministerial meetings occur fairly frequently. This is all part of the machinery. There is also the tax structure committee, which is composed of federal and provincial officials, and the question of a secretariat, asked about a few minutes ago, which is a subject that has been discussed at federal-provincial conferences for many years.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a supplementary question to the Prime Minister. When the Prime Minister refers to the transferring of shared cost programs to the provinces is it clear that he is talking only about shared cost programs; that is, that there is no intention to transfer such programs as old age security and family allowances?

Mr. Trudeau: That is right, Mr. Speaker. That is what I indicated in answer to one of the earlier questions. I was not talking about all areas of social security. Indeed, I would not say that I was talking about all shared cost programs. There may be some I do not have in mind, but I do include those which were the subject of suggestions or propositions of the then minister of finance in 1966, and the suggestions made today and yesterday by the present Minister of Finance. They concern certain shared cost programs and not all areas of social security.

[Later:]

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Prime Minister. In the light of the exchange we had yesterday concerning medicare, and in view of the fact the Prime Minister was not able to be here for the late show last night, may I ask him whether he has had an opportunity to review the Medical Care Act, and would he not now agree that that act provides for a review at the end of the five years, not for an automatic change?

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, I did review the act, Mr. Speaker. I reviewed also the statements and the context in which the statements were made. It is still my reading of the act that after five years there is a presumed intention of the government that there will be in respect of medicare what is intended in respect of the other joint schemes which were discussed earlier today, a transfer to the provinces of the fiscal resources to permit them to carry on with this form of social assistance, as it is the intention to have them do in other areas where there will be a transfer of resources.

[Mr. Trudeau.]

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I have a supplementary question. Was it not clear that this was to be made in the form of proposals and not a *fait accompli*?

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is. The act says, I believe, as it was quoted by the hon. member, that after five years there will be a review and that proposals of a specific nature will be made, the specific nature being that to which I referred, the transfer of tax room or other means. It seems to be quite clear that this act states the intention of the government as I have stated it.

Mr. Baldwin: I have a supplementary question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to remind hon. members that it is somewhat irregular to be debating the interpretation of a statute at this time. I know a number of questions have been asked and because of the importance of the subject I allowed the questions to be answered. Perhaps we should not pursue the debate much further.

Mr. Baldwin: I am not going to ask for an interpretation. I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether it is the intention of the government to ensure, no matter what scheme is followed, that the provinces will be provided with the equivalent of 50 per cent of the cost of this program, pursuant to the statute?

Mr. Trudeau: It is the general approach which was presented in 1966, Mr. Speaker, that the federal government would withdraw and provide tax room and supplementary benefits of an equalization nature which would be the equivalent of the federal government's participation before withdrawal.

IMMIGRATION

REPORTED STATEMENT RESPECTING PRIVILEGES OF BRITISH IMMIGRANTS

On the orders of the day:

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the right hon. Prime Minister. Would the Prime Minister advise the house whether the Secretary of State was announcing government policy in stating his support for the view that privileges enjoyed by what he called British immigrants should be withdrawn? In particular would the Prime Minister say whether these privileges are to be withdrawn from