

ment and, if we are to believe the words of the Minister of National Defence, perhaps even conscription? Is it to be a broad referendum proposal, or is it to apply particularly, specifically and narrowly to one question?

**Mr. Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, the proposal of the government is to have enabling legislation, but on a very restricted basis.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Trudeau:** Of course, if the opposition has different views, we would be prepared to consider them.

**Mr. Fraser:** We want to know what yours are.

**Mr. Trudeau:** You will know them, if you listen and listen intelligently.

**Mr. Fraser:** That means you have to speak intelligently.

**Mr. Trudeau:** The enabling legislation would not be intended to change in any sense our parliamentary system. I still think the responsibility for legislation and policies should rest in parliament. We live under a form of representative democracy, and we do not intend to change that. In this sense we would not want enabling legislation which would permit any government at any time to come forward with referendums to solve problems that the House of Commons or the government find too hot to handle. In this sense it would be a tool used perhaps only for a limited number of years to permit us to deal with constitutional questions and questions of national unity.

**Mr. Clark:** Since by his own words the Prime Minister is proposing to change the traditions of the parliamentary system and to change them in a way that the government of Quebec is not proposing to change them, is it the intention of the government to have this referendum apply simply to one question relating to unity, or are there other categories of questions which might relate to other broad matters which will also be included? In other words, will the legislation deal specifically and narrowly with one question, or will there be the possibility of moving into other areas?

I gather that what the Prime Minister was trying to do in his earlier answer was exclude questions like capital punishment, abortion or conscription, in which the Minister of National Defence is interested, but is the legislation to be drawn so narrowly that it will focus only on one question?

**Mr. Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, I just answered that. I just said that the question or questions in a referendum would be on the matter of national unity or of constitutional problems, not on other matters such as those which the Leader of the Opposition mentioned.

**Mr. Clark:** That remains a fairly broad area, and we will have to look specifically at the legislation when it comes.

Was the announcement of the Prime Minister yesterday made on the basis of discussion within the cabinet of Canada, and did it reflect a decision taken by the cabinet?

### *Oral Questions*

**Mr. Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know if this question is relevant.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Andre:** You just answered it. Thank you.

### DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION WITH PROVINCIAL PREMIERS

**Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands):** Mr. Speaker, my question is also to the Prime Minister. Given that this proposal has very important ramifications for our Canadian parliamentary system, has the Prime Minister had an opportunity as yet to discuss this matter with the other partners in confederation, namely, the provincial premiers? If not, what is his intention?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I answered this question in my first reply. I indicated that before giving this legislation first reading I would want to consult with the opposition leaders in the House and with the premiers. I have indicated that I will be visiting with all the premiers in the next month and a half and this is one of the subjects I want to raise with them.

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### FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS

#### POSSIBILITY OF FIRST MINISTERS' CONFERENCE IN 1977

**Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands):** A final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. We know of the Prime Minister's interest in consultation with the provincial premiers which was spelled out at the Victoria conference in the proposal he put forward at that time when he said:

A Conference composed of the Prime Minister of Canada and the First Ministers of the Provinces shall be called by the Prime Minister of Canada at least once a year . . .

Given that this is the first year since Victoria that there has been no meeting of first ministers and given that the premier of New Brunswick and the premier of Ontario have both in recent days asked the Prime Minister for a meeting of first ministers to discuss questions of national unity and questions of economic recovery, is it the intention of the Prime Minister to convene a meeting of first ministers in 1977 or has he indeed abandoned that proposal which he enunciated at Victoria?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. lady will recall that was a proposal we put forth at Victoria for a constitution which would be repatriated and which would have an amending formula. The hon. lady will recall also that this proposition was not acceptable to all provinces and therefore was not proceeded with. Therefore, in that sense there is no obligation to have these conferences, but in the sense that I always convene a conference when the