

*Dominion-Provincial Relations*

present administration should be permitted. Now we are confronted with the situation that having made these statements, having said that this would be one of the first assignments the government would undertake if elected, the fact is clearly revealed that this government is not carrying out that promise. We are certainly entitled at this stage to remind the country and to remind the government itself of this fact.

The fact is that this particular matter was dealt with by the government only in the month of November. As the record now demonstrates, the Prime Minister clearly indicated time and time again that one of the first things he would do as Prime Minister would be to settle this question once and for all. We now know that when the federal government met with the provincial governments in November the Prime Minister stated the policy of the government in some particulars. By way of parenthesis, it is interesting for the committee to recall that that conference began on a Monday and that on the previous Friday the Prime Minister was asked to tell the house what position the government would take when it met with the provinces on the following Monday. The Prime Minister refused to take the house into his confidence as to the policy which he would publicly outline on the following Monday. I think that this was not in keeping with the traditional attitude which the Prime Minister takes toward the rights of parliament. And then on the Monday the Prime Minister made his statement to the provinces.

**Mr. Fleming:** Mr. Chairman, I rise on a point of order. What on earth has this to do with the clause that is now under consideration? The house approved the principle of the bill.

**Mr. Martin (Essex East):** If my hon. friend will just be patient he will find that it has everything to do with the bill.

**Mr. Fleming:** When does it start?

**Mr. Martin (Essex East):** When the Prime Minister outlined the policy of his administration that policy did not provide an answer to the questions put by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillington a few moments ago. That certainly is very much involved in this particular discussion.

**Mr. Fleming:** No.

**Mr. Martin (Essex East):** When the Prime says "no". That is his attitude. However, I want him to respect the fact that there are others in this house who feel very strongly that that is involved and very

seriously, too. As the hon. member for Quebec East said when he spoke the other day, the principle of equalization was recognized for one year only. That principle is acknowledged by all the provinces including the premiers of Ontario and Quebec. Certainly, so far as one can judge from their statements made at the conference, that principle was recognized as a valid and effective way of dealing with all the provinces on an equitable basis. The so-called poorer provinces would in this way be better enabled to discharge their responsibilities. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillington had every justification for asking the questions they did, whether, assuming that my hon. friend after a federal election was given the responsibility of continuing in this post, the policy of this government would be to continue the principle of equalization which is acknowledged by everyone to be the only way of providing the kind of equitable treatment which should be made available to all the provinces of our country.

The fact is that my hon. friend has not answered this question. Now, he may not be in a position to do so; the government may have no policy in the matter. The fact is, whatever the reason, whether my hon. friend proposes in some months from now to abandon what he is now doing for a year, or whether it is that he has not yet obtained concurrence from his colleagues as to a continuation of this principle for more than a year, the Minister of Finance in this government has not been able to give a satisfactory reply to this particular question.

The result will be that in the province of Manitoba, and in all of the provinces certainly outside the two major ones, there will be understandably the deepest concern over the failure of the government to indicate that it is prepared to extend this principle of equalization beyond the year.

The point from which my hon. friend has diverted me is the one for which I ask his special consideration at this time. Is it possible to have satisfactory relations between the provinces and the federal government if the public business is going to be conducted in the way in which this particular matter has been pursued by the federal government? What was the claim made by my hon. friend when he spoke on this side of the house? What were the claims made by my hon. friend, his Prime Minister and others with regard to the way in which we should carry on with the provinces?

The suggestion was that if the provinces and the federal government sat down face to face, they might not be able to agree on all