

Inquiries of the Ministry

again, I am sure the Leader of the Opposition would like to regret that he used the word «dishonest» when it is obvious that he did not understand the problem in the first place—

Mr. Stanfield: I understood it.

Mr. Trudeau:—and he still does not understand it.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for York South.

[*Translation*]

Is the hon. member for Charlevoix rising on a point of order?

Hon. Martial Asselin (Charlevoix): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

You stated a moment ago that my question was not related to the one asked by the Leader of the Opposition. Information was wanted on the government's intentions with regard to new jobs and to the measures taken to fight unemployment. That is why I wish to ask the minister a supplementary question.

Mr. Speaker: I told the hon. member that, in my opinion, the supplementary question was not directly related to that of the Leader of the Opposition. I feel that, before coming back to the hon. member, in order to allow him to ask all the supplementaries he wishes, I should recognize the hon. member for York South who has a supplementary. Immediately after that, I will recognize the hon. member for Charlevoix.

[*English*]

UNEMPLOYMENT—SUGGESTED ADVANCEMENT OF DATE OF FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE FROM DECEMBER 6

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker. I should like to ask the Prime Minister the following question. In view of the fact that the rate of unemployment expected this winter will unfortunately be very considerable, and in view of the fact that works by the provinces and municipalities will also be needed in order to reduce unemployment to any considerable extent, would the Prime Minister reconsider advancing the date of the federal-provincial conference, which according to reports is now scheduled for December 6, to the end of October or early November in order that plans may be made by the municipalities and provinces as well as by federal authorities?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me I did make it clear to the House that, as far as this government was concerned, it has been making every effort it could to find an early date for the conference—not that we have used the lack of such a date as an excuse for not acting but that we did realize the anxiety of the House and everyone in the country to have this date set as soon as possible. This is why the government proposed an early date. When the leader of the New Democratic Party suggested a date late in October, he was obviously assuming that one week after the Ontario election there could be a federal-provincial meeting of some significance. I assume he is presuming that the Conservative leader will be re-elected.

[*Mr. Trudeau.*]

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: We on the government benches are not so certain. We rather think that there may be a change toward a Liberal administration.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: Therefore we cannot share the view of the leader of the New Democratic Party and Premier Schreyer that Mr. Davis will again be premier of Ontario.

Mr. Baldwin: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Peace River on a point of order.

Mr. Baldwin: I think Your Honour has held that we are not entitled to ask questions that call for an opinion. Equally the Prime Minister cannot give an opinion, especially when it is an unsound one.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member for York South.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I am going to try again despite the fact that the Prime Minister is playing games with a question as important as unemployment.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lewis: May I tell hon. members opposite that yesterday the Prime Minister said that some of us were playing politics. If the Prime Minister's answer was not that, what was it?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. It seems to me that we are not progressing very effectively this afternoon. Perhaps we might return to the question period with the hope that both questions and answers will be short and to the point.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Prime Minister whether he is ready to reconsider moving the date of the meeting, now set for December 6, to an earlier date than December 6, if possible at the end of October or some time in the first part of November? If the end of October is not possible, would he consider some time in the early half of November so there would still be some time to make plans for winter employment? May I also say that the Prime Minister should not answer in the light way that he did—

Some hon. Members: Order!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I did make it quite clear to the House, and indeed I made it quite clear in my letter yesterday to Premier Schreyer, that I would welcome a much earlier date if one could be found. If the leader of the NDP can arrange with the provinces for an earlier date, that would be perfectly satisfactory to us. This involves a matter of finding a date on which 11 heads of government agree, and that is not always an easy task. That is why I began last July to suggest dates to all the premiers. That is why we proceeded as in the past in good faith by inviting the provinces to state whether or not they could come on the dates I suggested and, if not, what later dates they preferred.