

Inquiries of the Ministry

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DOMINION-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS**CONSIDERATION OF ECONOMIC PRIORITIES—
PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION OF
UNITING PROVINCES**

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, I have one question for the Acting Prime Minister. Could he tell the house whether the question of priorities among the needs of the country in the fields of education, health and welfare are to be discussed during the current conference with the provincial premiers, as has been so often advocated by Premier Roblin of Manitoba?

Hon. Paul Martin (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I think it would be appropriate that the report on the conference be given by those who are on the Canadian delegation, and they will be in a position to make their report to the house tomorrow.

Mr. Lambert: A supplementary question. Might I suggest to the Acting Prime Minister that he put that under the item of "any other business"?

Mr. Thomas M. Bell (Saint John-Albert): A supplementary question to the Acting Prime Minister. In view of the further discussions at the conference regarding the union of at least two of the Atlantic provinces, will the government give the assurance that so far as federal responsibility is concerned the minimum constitutional safeguards of House of Commons and Senate representation will be made available to any united provinces as is now the case with individual provinces? I ask for this assurance because evidently British Columbia wishes to minimize the effect on the senatorial floor of the maritime provinces. I would ask the minister to take this question as notice.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will take it as notice. It is regrettable that the question is put just as the conference is about to conclude, but there will be a report made tomorrow.

[Later:]

Mr. Bell: Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask a supplementary question in respect of the dominion-provincial conference. I think the minister used the word "regrettable". May I ask him what he meant by "regrettable"? Is it regrettable that the maritime provinces want this senatorial guarantee?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): No. It is regrettable that my hon. friend did not pose the question at a time when it might have had greater application. I do not know whether this matter has been dealt with, but I am sure the matters affecting the constitution have been fully considered. If my hon. friend had wanted to make his point clear, it seems to me the time for him to pose the question was before the conference had terminated.

COMMONWEALTH RELATIONS**CONSIDERATION OF ESTABLISHMENT OF
PERMANENT SECRETARIAT**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister. In view of the fact that there will be a commonwealth conference next month in Britain which senior officials of each commonwealth country will attend for the purpose of discussing the formation of a commonwealth secretariat, and in view of the fact that Canada's attitude in the past has been against institutionalizing the commonwealth in any way, can the minister tell us who will be the Canadian delegate to this conference and what will be Canada's official attitude with regard to the setting up of a secretariat?

Hon. Paul Martin (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it is not necessary to indicate all the Canadian personnel at the conference but, as is publicly known, Mr. Arnold Smith of the Department of External Affairs, who played a very active part in the discussions at the recent prime ministers' conference as one of the officials, will be in charge of the Canadian delegation. It would be inappropriate until their deliberations have finished for me to go beyond this.

Mr. Harold E. Winch (Vancouver East): A supplementary question. Can I ask the minister whether he does not consider it important that at a conference of this nature a cabinet minister should represent Canada?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, the conference is a conference of officials. There has already been one discussion among officials representing commonwealth countries following the prime ministers' meeting, and this is another. Any final conclusion in matters of this sort, of course, can only be taken by representatives of the governments.