

*Inquiries of the Ministry*

government should not take the initiative in suggesting to all the provinces that a conference might be held to discuss this particular matter. A delay of another month will not matter very much in respect of this particular issue.

**Mr. Trudeau:** Well, Mr. Speaker, for years now the opposition and the hon. member in particular have been telling us we were not doing enough about the constitution. We are planning to do something about the constitution in December, and now they suggest we should set this agenda aside and deal with the matter of off-shore mineral rights.

**Mr. Lewis:** I rise on a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member for York South on a question of privilege.

**Mr. Lewis:** I respectfully suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that the Prime Minister has no right to distort words spoken by another member. I did not suggest that this conference be set aside; in fact I said that a delay of another month or so on this issue would not matter. I am sure the right hon. gentleman understood me to mean that this would not interfere with the conference this month but that another conference should be held at a later date. I resent this political play.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the hon. member. I honestly thought he was suggesting that the subject be dealt with in December. If he means at some later conference, I can only answer that last Friday I wrote to the provinces asking them for their views on the whole subject. If they are of the opinion that a federal-provincial conference should be held, then I am certainly willing to have one.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a supplementary question about that same matter.

Since the Supreme Court rendered its decision, has the Prime Minister heard from some provinces protesting that decision or have some provinces said they intended to contest it or asked the central government to organize a meeting to discuss that decision?

**Mr. Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, I do not think definite representations were made to that effect. I read in the newspapers, as the hon. member undoubtedly did, statements by some

provincial premiers who disagreed with the ruling but, to my knowledge, all the provinces were waiting to see what we meant, first by Mr. Pearson, and then by myself, when we stated that we would propose an equitable basis for a solution. And now that we have put it to them, we are awaiting their reply.

[*English*]

**Mr. Stanfield:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask one more question relating only to the point of whether the Prime Minister is now honouring the obligation stated by his predecessor. I should like to quote from the statement the Prime Minister made yesterday and ask him whether this is an accurate account of what he said in the house yesterday, as reported at page 3342 of *Hansard*:

My predecessor, Mr. Pearson, indicated at the federal-provincial conference of July 1965, and I repeated in the house on September 19, that we intend to proceed now by negotiation.

I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether in fact that is what he is doing.

**Mr. Trudeau:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. We put forward a proposition. I repeat that if some better propositions are available we will certainly want to discuss them, but we have to start with something. We feel this is a good starting point.

**Mr. Stanfield:** So it is a starting point.

**Mr. Donald MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond):** Mr. Speaker, I have a further supplementary question for the Prime Minister. I ask the Prime Minister whether he would consider legislation passed in this house to be reasonable; and would he say whether it would be fair for the law officers of the crown to retain the interpretation they adopted at the time that legislation was passed?

**Mr. Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, I do not think I should be asked to make a blanket statement that all decisions made in this house are reasonable.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I think we should move on to another subject. As hon. members know, supplementary questions are allowed at the discretion of the Chair, and there must be a point at which we should go on to another subject. If it seems we run out of questions or new subjects at a later time perhaps we can return to this one.

**Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond):** On a further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker—