

Inquiries of the Ministry

[Translation]

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS**COST OF FEDERALISM TO QUEBEC**

Hon. Martial Asselin (Charlevoix): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister.

Since the Premier of Quebec has confirmed that the report on the cost of federalism in Quebec, extracts of which were published last week in a Montreal newspaper, indicates that there have been neither gains nor losses in the province, I would ask the Prime Minister whether this assessment of Quebec federalism seems correct to him.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. In my opinion the question, as phrased, is hardly acceptable procedurally. The hon. member is inviting the Prime Minister to voice an opinion. I do not believe the question as expressed, to be in order and it might perhaps be rephrased.

Mr. Asselin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

During the last provincial election campaign, a report was published, emanating from the Fédération libérale du Canada to the effect that Quebec received more from the federal than it contributed thereto.

Therefore, as the Quebec government has also published a report in that connection, I should like to know if—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Maybe the hon. member could rephrase his question. It would be much simpler than to rise on a point of order.

Mr. Asselin: Mr. Speaker, has the Prime Minister read the report of the Quebec government on federalism and the opinion expressed by the Quebec Premier to the effect that no loss and no gain were registered in Quebec because of federalism. Furthermore, I would like to know if the Prime Minister or his government intends to bring in a similar report to properly inform the Quebec taxpayers?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have not read that report. I know that excerpts were published in newspapers but I have neither read nor seen them. However, to my knowledge, it is a report drafted by Quebec government officials, some of whom, by the way, are no longer employed by that government.

If the Quebec government intends to hold these figures as exact and wants to send them

[Mr. Hales.]

to us for debate, we shall be ready to consider them. However, the Quebec government has not yet brought these figures to my attention and I know that they have been communicated neither to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) nor to myself.

I do not see then how I could read a vague document drafted by former civil servants and published, so it seems, by wide-circulation newspapers.

Mr. Asselin: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question.

As it is an issue which raises a good deal of interest among Quebec taxpayers, would the Prime Minister consider appointing a commission of independent experts who could make an extensive study of the subject and report on it in order to inform the taxpayers?

Mr. Trudeau: As far as I am concerned, Mr. Speaker, I feel it would be an error to try and make such an inquiry. I know it has previously been undertaken, but I do not believe that anyone can accurately measure in terms of dollars and cents the benefits involved in belonging to a united Canada. I believe these benefits are much greater than that.

[English]

POWER**SKAGIT RIVER—APPLICATION BY SEATTLE CITY LIGHT COMPANY TO RAISE HEIGHT OF DAM—EFFECT OF INTERNATIONAL RIVER IMPROVEMENTS ACT**

Mr. Randolph Harding (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Has Seattle City Light applied to the federal government for a permit to raise the height of the Ross Dam and flood an estimated 6,000 acres of Canadian territory in the Skagit River Valley?

Hon. J. J. Greene (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that the permit under which Seattle Light is operating is that granted by the International Joint Commission in 1942. To the best of my knowledge no current permit has been applied for. It is my understanding that Seattle Power is operating under the apprehension that no new permit is required.

Mr. Pringle: Mr. Speaker, may I direct a supplementary question to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources?

Mr. Harding: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.