

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member may rest assured that I am keeping an eye open and that his group and himself in particular will be given their turn in a moment.

The hon. member for Abitibi.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**MEETING OF EDUCATION MINISTERS OF FRENCH SPEAKING COUNTRIES**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wish to ask the right hon. Prime Minister whether he can tell the house if he has received an official invitation from the Niger—and on what date—to attend or participate in the coming conference of the education ministers of francophone countries?

Right Hon. P.-E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, an invitation was in fact addressed to Canada. We received it on last November 17, I believe, or last Tuesday, from president Hamoni Diiori of the Niger. We have been invited to attend a conference, not of the ministers of education, but of French speaking countries in general.

Mr. Gilbert Rondeau (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a supplementary question.

Will that invitation be handed over to the province of Quebec or does the federal government intend to accept the invitation for itself and send its own delegation?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the invitation was extended to us, and we are in the process of considering what reply we will give.

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask a supplementary question.

I would like the Prime Minister to tell us if the federal government intends to hold direct consultations with the Quebec government with regard to sending a Canadian or a Quebec delegation to that conference.

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, we would hope that, in accordance with the policy established by right hon. Mr. Pearson at last year's federal-provincial conference, a delegation to such a conference will represent all Canadians and particularly French speaking Canadians who, as everyone knows, do not

[Mr. Laprise.]

live only in the province of Quebec but also in other provinces.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. members will admit perhaps that the situation has righted itself somewhat but just the same I give the floor to the hon. member for Champlain.

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a supplementary question.

In the invitation received by the federal government, is it mentioned that the Quebec government has also been invited?

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I can even say more. That invitation contained a special indication to the effect that it was their wish that Quebec would attend that conference and this is evidently in accordance with our own views. We hope, however, to establish a formula under which there would be a single Canadian delegation made up of the representatives of several provinces interested in the "francophonie" or French speaking countries.

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I wish to put a supplementary question.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister whether he intends, since there are many French speaking Canadians in other provinces, to convey that invitation to other Canadian provinces?

Mr. Trudeau: I did not hear very well, Mr. Speaker, but if—

Mr. Fortin: I will repeat my question in order to be well understood.

Since the Prime Minister said a while ago that there are many French speaking Canadians in other provinces, will he also convey that invitation to the other provinces?

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I said it and I say it again: We intend to make up a Canadian delegation including representatives of the various provinces interested in the French speaking countries.

[*English*]

INQUIRY OF THE MINISTRY

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Barry Mather (Surrey): Mr. Speaker, I have a question which I think I should direct to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Having in mind the announcement last night by the prime minister of British Columbia to the effect that he intends shortly to absorb