

Inquiries of the Ministry

morning press carries a report that a commonwealth ministerial meeting is to be held in London on Thursday and Friday of this week as a preliminary to the United Nations trade and development conference which is being held in Geneva next week. May I ask the Minister of Trade and Commerce two questions. First of all, who will represent Canada at the commonwealth conference on Thursday and Friday of this week? Second, is it true that one of the items on the agenda is a discussion as to the possibility of abandoning the present commonwealth preferential trading system?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Minister of Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Canadian government will be represented by my colleague the Secretary of State for External Affairs at the United Nations conference on trade and development. The meetings that are to be held in London are meetings of commonwealth ministers preliminary to the United Nations conference. We will be represented at those meetings by Mr. Dana Wilgress.

As to the second question about the agenda, it is not my understanding that commonwealth preferences as such are on the agenda, but there is on the agenda, of course, a proposal made by Mr. Prebisch, who is secretary of the United Nations conference, for a system of preferences for the trade of less developed countries with the industrialized countries of the world.

Mr. Douglas: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. May I ask the Prime Minister if this is likely to lead to a commonwealth prime ministers' conference on trade and have any representations been made by the Canadian government for the holding of such a conference?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to say at the present time whether anything developing out of the United Nations conference would require a commonwealth prime ministers' meeting, but my hon. friend knows that a meeting of commonwealth prime ministers to be held some time this summer or in the early autumn is currently under consideration.

Mr. Douglas: If the meeting in London on Thursday and Friday of this week is a ministerial meeting, may I ask the Prime Minister why Canada is not being represented by a minister?

Mr. Pearson: I will have to look into that, Mr. Speaker, but I do not think all the commonwealth countries are being represented by ministers at this London meeting.

[Mr. Douglas.]

DOMINION-PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE**DISCUSSION OF REDISTRIBUTION OF TAXING POWERS**

On the orders of the day:

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Gregoire (Lapointe): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Prime Minister. Could he tell us, after the budget that was introduced last night, whether there are still possibilities of discussion for the next federal-provincial conference to be held in Quebec in a few days, concerning fiscal redistributions between the federal and provincial governments?

[*Text*]

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): No, Mr. Speaker, the conference will be held as scheduled, and the major item of the agenda is shared programs and their effect on fiscal matters.

[*Later:*]

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gregoire: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. Was the Prime Minister invited to meet the several thousands of university students of the province of Quebec who are to hold meetings in Quebec city on the occasion of the next federal-provincial conference?

If he is invited, does the Prime Minister intend to meet those students to hear their views?

[*Text*]

Mr. Pearson: I do not think I have had any such invitation.

TRANS-CANADA AIR LINES**WINNIPEG MAINTENANCE BASE—REPRESENTATIONS BY UNION**

On the orders of the day:

Mrs. Margaret Konantz (Winnipeg South): I have a question for the Minister of Transport. Has the minister any information to give the house about a statement issued by union lodge 714 in Winnipeg concerning employment at the T.C.A. maintenance base?

Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the alert member for Winnipeg South—

Mr. Churchill: I was up on my feet three times.

Mr. Pickersgill:—having been able to get in ahead of a privy councillor should be congratulated. This matter was brought to my attention yesterday afternoon by a telephone call which I received from Mr. Gurney Evans, minister of trade and industry in the