

Inquiries of the Ministry

multipurpose connection between the mainland portions of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The objects of the authority would be to undertake all preparatory steps necessary with a view to the ultimate construction of a tunnel for the purpose of transporting goods and persons between Newfoundland and Labrador and, to the best of its endeavours, to ensure the necessary supporting facilities such as highways, connecting roads, rail lines, power lines, waterfront installations and other similar developments as ancillary works. In some respects our province has been an overlooked part of this land—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Motion agreed to and bill read the first time.

[*Translation*]

DOMINION-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS**PROSPECTIVE FEDERAL WITHDRAWAL FROM JOINT SOCIAL PROGRAMS**

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Martial Asselin (Charlevoix): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the right hon. Prime Minister.

In view of the fact that he indicated yesterday that the federal government would, within the next few years, withdraw from shared-cost programs and that medicare would be handed over to the provinces, I should like to know whether he intends to adopt the same attitude with regard to the whole field of social security? Does the present government intend to hand back to the provinces their jurisdiction in this field?

Right Hon. P.-E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the government's position in this regard was announced two years ago. It is a policy that is continuing. In most of the fields concerning social security governed by cost-sharing programs, we have already allowed the province of Quebec to take a fiscal equivalent, and we have suggested to the other provinces to follow the same policy, in order that the province that levies taxes shall be also called upon to use and administer the amounts collected.

Once again I say that this is part of the government policy and that this has been the subject of proposals not only in 1966 but also during the federal-provincial conference of finance ministers that is now taking place.

Mr. Asselin: I would like to ask a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

[*Mr. Marshall.*]

Would the right hon. Prime Minister tell the house at what time his government will completely hand over the field of social welfare to all the provinces? Will it be on the occasion of the federal-provincial conference to be held here next December? Have there already been consultations with the provincial delegates to pursue the line of action of the government?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, while not repeating my previous answer, I could perhaps refer to the word "completely" used by the hon. member.

In our opinion, social security falls completely under provincial jurisdiction, but we should be able give a definition of what is meant by "social security". We have never thought, for example, that the federal government does not have complete jurisdiction with regard to family allowances. I therefore do not understand what the hon. member means by the word "completely". As for our general policy, I outlined it earlier.

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask a complementary question.

Does the right hon. Prime Minister not agree that his statements on social security are slightly contradictory?

On the one hand, the right hon. Prime Minister says that the federal government will eventually give back to the provinces their rights in the field of social legislation. On the other hand, he says that the new 2 per cent tax is a social development tax intended to help social legislation in Canada, and he takes the attitude of not paying to the provinces the amounts of money—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Caouette: —they are requesting.

Does the right hon. Prime Minister not see a contradiction in this attitude?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, there is no contradiction, because in all these fields—as I would remind the hon. member—we have not passed any legislation. We have not tried to say how, for example, the joint programs should be administered by the provinces; we have been satisfied with imposing taxes and transferring the proceeds to them. That is exactly what we are doing with the 2 per cent tax. We just tell the provinces that this way of administering is not consistent with our long term policy and that, in the long run, we want, as much as possible, to request all the