

Oral Questions

from the Criminal Code thus making it a matter for those directly concerned and the medical profession and provincial health authorities. In addition, the bill gives effect to the principles outlined in recommendations 126 and 127 of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women and is supportive of the views recently expressed by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner).

Motion agreed to, the bill read the first time and ordered to be printed.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS**DATE AND AGENDA OF ECONOMIC CONFERENCE—POSSIBLE DISCUSSION OF SPECIFIC PROPOSAL ON CONSENSUS**

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, a few days ago the Prime Minister referred to a conference on the economy. I assume the Prime Minister was referring to the conference of first ministers to be held shortly after Easter. Could the Prime Minister give us the precise dates of that conference and indicate whether, generally, it will be a conference open to the public or generally a closed conference?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Yes, Mr. Speaker. I have had answers to my letters from all the premiers on the subject of the dates, the agenda and the question of whether it should be an open or closed conference. Some answers are in the form of written letters and others were by telephone or telex. The general decision is to have the conference on the Wednesday and Thursday after Easter week. The dates are the ninth and tenth. The items will be, first, the oil and gas problem, pricing and so on, and the second will be the economy. The first day, by agreement of most of the first ministers concerned, likely will be an open conference. As to the second day it is likely to be closed.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, has the Prime Minister requested that the subject of consensus which is being pursued by his government be on the agenda or is his government putting before the conference of first ministers a specific proposal incorporating a form of consensus to be considered by the conference of first ministers?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the federal position will be made known at the time of the conference. It is a practice rather well respected that position papers generally are not made public in advance. If I remember the early practice, it was based on the desire not to try to encourage participants to harden their positions in advance on any one subject and to permit everyone to come to the conference with as open a mind as possible. In this sense we do not intend to publish any papers in advance, and the exact position taken by the federal government on these two items, of course, will be made known at the time.

Mr. Stanfield: I am sure the fact that the Prime Minister answered a slightly different question than I asked

[Mr. Leggatt.]

him was purely accidental, not intentional. I did not ask the Prime Minister whether he intended to publish the position of the government before the conference met. I asked him whether the government was placing before the conference a specific proposal incorporating a form of consensus to be considered by the conference.

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the question is the same and the answer would be the same. The Leader of the Opposition is asking me to say now what I will say at the conference.

Mr. Stanfield: No, I am not.

Mr. Trudeau: He is asking me whether I am going to put a certain position in front of the conference, and I ask him to wait and see.

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THE CANADIAN ECONOMY**INFLATION—POSSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES ON WAGE AND SALARY INCREASES—REASON FOR FAILURE TO ACT**

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. In view of the advice of the Governor of the Bank of Canada to the Minister of Finance yesterday that the rates at which the money incomes of various groups in Canadian society are now increasing are extraordinary, and his further statement that nothing would do more to improve the prospects for the Canadian economy than a rapid slackening in the tempo of this race for higher money incomes, would the minister indicate if, based on this concrete advice that highlights the urgency of the matter, he intends to take any concrete steps to ensure a decline in this race for higher money incomes through the issuing of at least interim guidelines for income increases that would apply until the consensus chats are over, as they appear to drone on and on?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Is this not the same abuse of the rules that we had once before when a supplementary question was asked which was not supplementary at all.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I was watching carefully for a connection with the conference and noted that the hon. member was at least good enough to draw a tenuous connection in the last sentence of his question to the economic conference to which reference had been made. Had it not been for that, I would have made the same point that has just been raised by the hon. member.

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the Governor of the Bank of Canada of course recognizes the same problem we have recognized for some time. This is the purpose of the consensus process, to try to evolve an understanding whereby various claims against the economy from various sectors can be moderated along the lines suggested by the Governor.

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Finance. In view of the further