constitution by the constitutional committee composed of members of the House of Commons and the absence of at least one premier, namely, the premier of the province of Saskatchewan, are these absences or avoidances any indication that the federal government is proceeding at this time on its own initiative regardless of what the attitudes of the premiers might be?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Obviously not, Mr. Speaker. We have made an agreement with the provinces that all provinces will have until the 28th of this month to indicate their agreement or disagreement. As the hon. member said, one premier was absent from the conference. He was well represented there, but he is in the same position as every other premier and, indeed, as the Prime Minister. He has until the 28th to give his answer.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a supplementary question to the Prime Minister.

Considering the importance of the question before us and since the Quebec government cannot within ten days take a serious and perfectly justified decision about the answer which it must give to the federal government, will the Prime Minister allow the Quebec government to sound all classes of society regarding that important question for Quebec and for that purpose, is he ready to extend the period beyond June 28?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, premier Bourassa is perfectly capable of speaking for himself. He has taken a decision and I do not think that he needs the hon. member for Joliette to tell him what it should be.

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[*English*]

EDUCATION

GOVERNMENT POSITION ON FINANCING OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION IN LIGHT OF EXPIRY OF AGREEMENTS WITH PROVINCES IN 1972

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): I would like to direct a question to the Secretary of State. In view of the fact that the agreements between the federal government and the provinces for the financing of post-secondary education expire in 1972, and in light of the very serious consequences to post-secondary education and to the provinces if the agreements are not renewed or new agreements negotiated, would the minister consider making a statement before the House rises at the end of this month about the position of the federal government with regard to the future of the financing of post-secondary education?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Gérard Pelletier (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, I would quite willingly consider the proposal of the member. But I must point out to him that since January repeated and intensive negotiations have been held with the Canadian Council of Ministers of Education, as well as bilateral negotiations with each of the provincial Ministers of Education—all very important people—since this is a field of provincial jurisdiction. We still hope to come to an agreement, which would allow a statement to be made to this House, not only on the attitude of the federal government, which is generally known, to the effect that an agreement has been renewed for two years, and that in the meantime plans will be made for a complete revision of the agreements in 1974. Obviously, however, for a general statement to be made, we should have completed our present negotiations with the provinces; unfortunately, this is not yet the case.

[*Mr. Korchinski.*]

[*English*]

Mr. Orlikow: May I ask the Secretary of State whether the reports are true that the major factor in the inability to reach an agreement is the desire of the federal government to put a limit on the amount of its contribution for post-secondary education, which has been 50 per cent under the old agreement?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pelletier: I think that the hon. member confuses two things Mr. Speaker. As regards the 50 per cent part of the expenses, I do not think that the federal government ever asked questions about it. It stated the same question as the provinces, that is, at what rate should we allow post secondary education costs to increase? This is a matter of concern not only for the federal government, that foots 50 per cent of the bill, but for most provinces, that pay the remaining 50 per cent.

* * *

[*English*]

INFORMATION

STATEMENT BY MINISTER OF JUSTICE ON PUBLIC'S RIGHT TO KNOW ABOUT GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): I would like to ask the Prime Minister whether, in light of the controversy raging in the United States about the publication of government documents, the Minister of Justice was enunciating government policy when he said at Queens University:

> The right to know is fundamental to any participation in democracy...What is necessary, then, is a freedom of information act entitling the individual to information which the government authority has arbitrarily seen fit to withhold.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Yes, Mr. Speaker. On the first part of the question we hold that the freedom or right to know is basic to democracy. Whether or not this must be entrenched in the law is for the government to decide.

Mr. Baldwin: In light of the fact that this statement was made over a year ago, would the Prime Minister discuss with the President of the Privy Council steps to expedite the passage and consideration of Bill C-250?

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, Mr. Speaker.