

second wire. I suspect that he is. I did reply to the first one and held a meeting with the group in question.

Mr. Lewis: What was the result of the meeting?

Mr. Jamieson: The reason for the failure to reply—and I know a reply is now being prepared, but whether or not it has been sent I am not certain—was that an attempt was made to try to get something in the way of specific information regarding what the intentions of CNR were. I regret to say that at present there does not appear to be additional freight that could be channelled through that particular route.

Mr. Lewis: Has the minister discussed with CNR the possibility of grouping together freight destined for St. John's on to one ship which could be unloaded at that transit shed?

Mr. Jamieson: Yes, a number of alternatives have been discussed. The simple truth is that at present the total volume of freight going to the province is not adequate to keep the facilities going at the various ports of entry, and any such diversion as was proposed would simply result in transferring unemployment from one port to another. In other words, the main objective has to be to try to get additional freight, and this is what is now being attempted.

[Translation]

FINANCE

QUEBEC—REQUEST FOR REFUND OF \$200 MILLION COLLECTED FOR MEDICARE

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister.

Could he inform the House whether he or his government has received an ultimatum from the Quebec government with regard to the refund of the \$200 million collected for Medicare?

Mr. Speaker: I seem to recall that the question has already been asked. However, the Prime Minister may answer the hon. member.

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I have listened with interest to your remarks and, when reading recent issues of *Hansard*, I saw that this question had not been asked, that we are in fact dealing with an ultimatum from the government of Quebec.

Inquiries of the Ministry

This is why I should like to know whether the federal government has received from the Quebec government a certain ultimatum concerning those \$200 million.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, a request, not an ultimatum, was made about this at the last federal-provincial conference. If the hon. member refers to a particular form of ultimatum, I must answer no. There was none in my opinion because, when the request was made to the federal government, we replied that the health insurance scheme had been established by the federal government, after consultations with the government of Quebec. It is unfortunate for the province of Quebec that the present government has taken so much time to implement this program, but we are glad that the people of Quebec, thanks to funds from the federal government, will benefit from this health insurance plan beginning July 1.

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Prime Minister, whom I wish to thank for his most interesting and detailed answer.

Is there at the present time a group of experts from the federal government who are investigating this matter in co-operation with provincial officials?

Mr. Trudeau: The answer to this particular question is no, Mr. Speaker. But, the hon. member is perhaps referring to certain dealings between federal and provincial officials with regard to the transfer of \$12 million to the province of Quebec in aid of technical schools. The Quebec authorities refuse these funds because they do not want to tell the people of the province that this money was provided by the federal government. So, if the province of Quebec refuses to accept these \$12 million, it is its own problem.

[English]

TAXATION

WHITE PAPER ON REFORM—REACTION OF GOVERNMENT TO CRITICISMS

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. It has to do with the report in the morning press to the effect that the Liberal members of the House have raised strong objections to various sections of the white paper and that there is hope of repentance on the part of the minister. Would he say whether or not he is in a position to