

• (2:20 p.m.)

ORAL QUESTIONS

DOMINION-PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE

REQUEST FOR STATEMENT OF SUBJECTS TO
BE DISCUSSED AT JUNE MEETING

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I had hoped the Minister of Finance would be in the house to answer questions which arise from increases in the prime lending rate in the United States. The rates have risen from 7½ per cent to 8 per cent.

May I nevertheless direct a question to the Prime Minister about something else. Does he intend to let parliament see a copy of the agenda for the federal-provincial conference to be held this week? If so, when does he propose to do this?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the first question, my hon. friend knows that the Minister of Finance is to be in the house tomorrow. To answer the second part of the question, it has been agreed by the provincial premiers and myself that no part of the conference working papers, notes or agendas will be made public in advance of the conference. So the answer to that question is that the house will not know that.

Mr. Stanfield: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Will the Prime Minister say whether any progress has been made by the ministerial committees on proposals relating to the Senate, the Supreme Court, and the declaration of rights prior to this week's meeting? Or is it the intention of the government, as indicated in some apparently inspired newspaper articles over the weekend, to leave this matter aside and turn to proposals to do with spending power and regional disparity?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. gentleman is wrong in assuming that these were government inspired stories. I did not see them myself, but obviously, we are bound to respect the decision of the provinces made in conjunction with ourselves to keep this a private working session. Therefore to comment on this session would be a breaking of that commitment on behalf of the federal government.

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I have a further supplementary question and I suppose I will receive a similar sort of answer. However, we must continue to ask for information on behalf of parliament and the country. Has the federal proposal on the spending power been circulated among the provinces in order that this proposal be discussed during this week's meeting? Also, will we in parliament be given an opportunity to see this?

Mr. Trudeau: Well, Mr. Speaker, whether parliament will be given an opportunity is a question which is separate from the issue of this week's federal-provincial meeting. If the opposition parties so desire, I would be prepared to consider in the next session of parliament our having a committee on the constitution. Perhaps it could be a joint committee of the House and Senate. That is something we can discuss when the time comes around.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Trudeau: This is independent once again of this meeting of the federal-provincial conference.

Mr. Stanfield: Well—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Has the hon. member for York South a supplementary?

[Translation]

ATTENDANCE OF PREMIERS—OPPOSITION
MEMBERS AS OBSERVERS

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Prime Minister a supplementary question.

Is he assured that the provincial premiers will be at the conference? Secondly, will opposition members be registered as observers and, thirdly, will a debate on the Canadian monetary question be on the agenda?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): In reply to the first question, Mr. Speaker, I must say we expect all premiers to be present, since they all agreed on the date. Because of elections—those in Manitoba—one premier had asked whether it was possible to change the date, but since too many provinces could not agree on a new date, we agreed on the original date, this week, and I understand that all premiers will attend.

With regard to the second question, Mr. Speaker, every province is free to form its