

Dominion-Provincial Relations

again in January. What was the Prime Minister's reply to that letter? It was as follows:

Ottawa, December 21, 1957.

My dear Premier:

On my return from attending the NATO council meetings in Paris, I have received your letter of December 18 in regard to the discussion which took place at the recent dominion-provincial conference.

This is only an interim acknowledgement of your letter. My colleagues and I will wish to study carefully your further submission before commenting on it. I shall merely assure you that this matter will receive our careful attention.

Yours sincerely,

John G. Diefenbaker.

I have read the entire letter that the Prime Minister wrote to Premier Campbell. I want to come back to the substance of that letter in a moment, but I read it now to make it clear that the Prime Minister did not in any way challenge Premier Campbell's statement in his letter that it was expected that they would meet in January of this year. In other words, Mr. Chairman, it was clearly understood—indeed, this was in the nature of a promise—that they would be called together again to deal with this matter. But despite many questions which we have asked and letters from other premiers, the month has just about gone by without that conference being held.

May I now come back again, Mr. Chairman,—just in order to show how unilateral this action is—to the way in which the premier of my province has been treated. Some of us will try to give him a certain kind of treatment later on this year, but at the moment he is the premier of Manitoba, trying to represent the interests of that province so far as federal-provincial arrangements are concerned.

Mr. Pickersgill: And doing it very well.

Mr. Sinclair: Hear, hear.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): With the support of Premier Douglas and one or two others he is doing a very good job.

On January 13 I asked the Prime Minister whether he had replied to Premier Campbell's letter of December 18. I would ask you to bear in mind that this is the most important and most substantial letter on federal-provincial matters written to this government after the conference of November 25 and November 26. When I asked the Prime Minister on January 13 whether he had yet replied, this was his answer as reported at page 3245 of *Hansard*:

I shall be obliged to look up the letters in question before I am in a position to answer.

Frankly, Mr. Chairman, I do not regard as a sample of very close attention to this important matter the fact that on January

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

13 the Prime Minister did not know whether or not he had answered Premier Campbell's important letter of December 18. A week later, nothing having been said voluntarily by the Prime Minister on this point, I asked him again whether he had replied to Premier Campbell's letter of December 18. This is the reply of the Prime Minister as found at page 3512 of *Hansard* of January 20:

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have not had any opportunity to consider that matter since the hon. gentleman asked the question. But I think there is a paragraph in my letter, as I recollect it, saying that a further letter would be sent to Premier Campbell. That is my intention. I speak entirely from recollection. I was under the impression, as I listened to the question, that there was a portion of my letter which gave promise of a further letter.

There you have the Prime Minister on January 20 saying that it was his intention to write further to Premier Campbell in reply to his letter of December 18. But, Mr. Chairman, on Saturday of that week we were informed by the Minister of Finance, not that a letter had gone to Premier Campbell answering the lengthy and substantial case that he made on December 18 but rather that "take it or leave it" telegrams had been sent to the ten provincial premiers telling them what was going to be done. On January 25, Mr. Chairman, the day on which the Minister of Finance told us about these telegrams, I made a further reference to Premier Campbell's letter in these words which are found at page 3796 of *Hansard* of January 25:

Will there be any other reply by letter to Premier Campbell of Manitoba with respect to the letter he wrote the Prime Minister on December 18, in which he discussed the whole question of the relationship between changes for all the provinces and special grants for the Atlantic provinces, or will further discussion of Premier Campbell's suggestions be left until the federal-provincial conference is reconvened?

Mr. Fleming: I had better not speak too positively without refreshing my memory on the contents of Premier Campbell's letter, but I think it will be clear that the course of action proposed by the government as indicated in the telegram is a fairly complete course of action with regard to the immediate situation. Broader questions can best be considered when the dominion-provincial conference reconvenes.

There it is, Mr. Chairman. On January 13 the Prime Minister did not know whether or not he had answered Premier Campbell's letter. On January 20 he said it was his intention to answer it. On January 25 the Minister of Finance says there will not be any other answer than this telegram to Premier Campbell, and that these broader questions that he has raised can be dealt with at the next meeting of the dominion-provincial conference. Yet the Minister of