

Inquiries of the Ministry

In view of the importance of the matter and of public reports, can the Minister of Justice confirm whether a constitutional conference is going to be held in Canada later this year? If so, where and when, who will participate, and what will be the agenda of such a conference?

Mr. Speaker: I suggest that the minister take this question as notice.

[Later:]

Mr. Scott: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order concerning the ruling Your Honour just made on my question to the Minister of Justice. I would appreciate your advice, but I had always understood that a minister decides whether to take a question as notice, not Your Honour. You may rule me out of order by suggesting that my question be placed on the order paper, but in this case the minister was rising to reply to my question when Your Honour made that suggestion.

Mr. Speaker: Then in order to be doubly sure may I suggest to the hon. member that he put his question on the order paper.

AGRICULTURE

REPORTED SHORTAGE OF LABOUR ON FARMS

On the orders of the day:

Mr. P. B. Rynard (Simcoe East): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Minister of Agriculture whether he is aware of an acute labour shortage in agriculture, particularly on beef and dairy farms?

Hon. Harry W. Hays (Minister of Agriculture): Of course, Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the situation. We have been doing some studies recently and have found that over the last 10 years we have been losing about 3 per cent of our farm labour force each year, and we are now down to about 600,000. We are considering this very serious problem. I cannot say anything further than that at the moment, but we do recognize that this is a serious problem.

Mr. Raymond Langlois (Megantic): A supplementary question to the Minister of Agriculture. I asked him the other day whether he had any intention of setting up the standing committee on agriculture soon. Is the minister ready today to give us a date as to when that committee will be operating?

Mr. Hays: I can only assure the hon. member again that it will be very soon.

LEGALITY OF ACTIONS DURING TRANSFER OF DUTIES

On the orders of the day:

[Translation]

Mr. Clement Vincent (Nicolet-Yamaska): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Justice.

Could the minister tell the house whether he has now received a report from his legal officers concerning the orders in council dealing with the respective powers of the Minister of Agriculture and of the Minister of Forestry and the signature of both ministers for the period of February 3 to February 20? If so, could he inform us as to when he intends to report to the house on that subject?

Hon. Guy Favreau (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I must say that I have started getting preliminary reports but I will have to study them myself before I form a final opinion. I will be in a position to report to the house next Tuesday.

[Text]

ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE

INQUIRY AS TO POLICY RESPECTING RETIREMENT

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Bow River): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address a question to the minister of defence. Is it a fact that some personnel in the R.C.A.F. are being retired before the expiry of their normal service term? If so, is any arrangement being made for compensation in this regard?

Hon. Paul Hellyer (Minister of National Defence): Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is true; but perhaps I should take the question as notice and give a more detailed answer tomorrow.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

REDUCTION IN PAY AND ALLOWANCES FOR SEA CADET OFFICERS

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Lucien Cardin (Associate Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, last Friday the hon. member for Saint John-Albert asked a question with regard to the reduction in rates of pay and allowances for sea cadet officers. I am now in a position to give the hon. member the following information.

As part of the over-all reduction of defence expenditures, and to bring the pay and allowances received by sea cadet officers in line with the reduced amounts available to Royal Canadian Navy reserve active list officers, the number of days pay and allowances that a sea cadet officer may receive for the performance of divisional drills has been reduced