

Inquiries of the Ministry

forth by the government of Canada in its working paper submitted several federal-provincial conferences ago?

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, Mr. Speaker, this is still the position of the federal government. As the Leader of the Opposition says, it was published in a white paper that we tabled at the conferences. I should add that at the request of one of the provinces we have asked the other provinces to consider an amendment to section 94A. This was done by the Minister of Justice in consultation with the various provinces as much, I believe, as two months ago. None of the provinces has yet indicated agreement, nor has the federal government; but the Minister of Justice did bring this amendment to the attention of the other provinces. We have no final position from the other provinces on this as yet.

Mr. Stanfield: Am I to understand from the Prime Minister that his government is not prepared to accept the proposed changes to section 94A, and that the government of Canada will go to the conference in Victoria taking precisely the same position in regard to income support and social services jurisdiction as was expressed in the working paper presented at a prior federal-provincial conference?

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, Mr. Speaker. In reply to the second part of the question, we will repeat the position we took in the working papers to which the hon. member refers, but we will discuss with all the provinces the possibility of this amendment to Section 94A that I mentioned a moment ago and which was brought to the attention of all the provinces. I do not know what the consensus of the conference will be.

NATURE OF PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO SECTION 94A—
MAINTENANCE OF NATIONAL STANDARDS IN SOCIAL
SECURITY PROGRAMS

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Prime Minister a supplementary question. Would he indicate to the House what kind of amendment was requested? While I am pleased to know that the Prime Minister has had a conference with the Prime Minister of Quebec, would he also indicate to the House whether he has had direct discussions with the premier of any other province on this matter?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, in reply to the latter question, I have had, of course, direct discussions with other premiers regarding the June conference. In reply to the first question, I cannot give the exact text of what was suggested, though it has been submitted to all provinces, because we did agree that the documents for this conference on June 14, 15 and 16 would not be made public. Therefore I do not think I should make the substance of it public.

Mr. Lewis: Could the Prime Minister at least inform the House, if he feels free to do so, whether the approach taken would remove from the federal Parliament any jurisdiction in this field, or would it be a divided or

[Mr. Stanfield.]

concurrent jurisdiction? Does the Prime Minister feel free to tell us in what direction the amendment would go?

Mr. Trudeau: Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I do not feel free to answer that question; to do so would be to reveal the substance of the amendment. I hasten to add that it is merely to make the negotiations more hopeful that we are taking the position that no province will publish its position on negotiations that might have taken place since the February consensus.

Mr. Lewis: Can we have from the Prime Minister, even at this stage, an assurance that the federal government will not agree to any amendment to the constitution that would destroy any possibility of national standards, that, even though some province or provinces may have particular responsibilities or additional powers, national standards in the area of old age security and other social security measures will not disappear from the scene in Canada?

Mr. Trudeau: That indeed is the position we have taken in our working papers. I probably would not want to go even as far as the leader of the NDP when he says even though some provinces might have—I forget his expression—some special powers. We are not taking this position. As I said to the Leader of the Opposition, we are taking the position of our working paper, which is known to the public. However, we are going to meet in Victoria to negotiate and discuss, and the provinces and the federal government will have to make up their minds as to what they are willing to agree to by way of amendment, if we are going to reach any agreement at all. As the House knows, there will be no binding agreement imposed on Parliament. If any agreement is reached in Victoria it will of course be discussed in Parliament to see whether or not we have its approval.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask a supplementary question.

Everyone knows that the Prime Minister took a constitutional in company with the premier of Quebec yesterday afternoon. Was Section 94A of the Constitution then discussed? My second question is as follows: will whatever is granted to Quebec be also made available to other provinces?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, as for the other questions, I do not want to go into the detail of the discussions. But as regards the question asked by the Social Credit leader, I may say that should there be a constitutional amendment the position of the federal government is to insure effectively that all the provinces receive the same treatment.

I would like to add that the difficulties with regard to the amendment which the hon. member has mentioned are as follows: the federal government feels—and I believe that this touches on the question raised by the leader of the New Democratic Party—that it should continue to redistribute the wealth to the poor of our coun-