

Inquiries of the Ministry

before in the realm of dominion-provincial fiscal relations in this country; in other words, a comprehensive co-operative study of those common problems with a view to achieving long range comprehensive understandings and arrangements in regard to them.

Mr. Hazen Argue (Assiniboia): A supplementary question. Will such a study at this conference include the possibility of providing a winter works program for the coming winter to take care of unemployment, or will such a contingency be beyond the scope of this conference?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Mr. Speaker, that type of study is one falling within the sphere of the labour departments of the federal and provincial governments. It is not strictly a matter pertaining to fiscal problems between the various levels of government, but there are many questions associated with common undertakings on the part of the various levels of government that obviously do relate to the fiscal problems within dominion-provincial relations.

Mr. Argue: I take it the minister's answer is that no particular study of the unemployment question will be dealt with?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): No, I did not say that. I was asked by the hon. member a specific question in regard to a winter works program, as I took it, for next winter. A similar question was asked yesterday of my colleague the Minister of Labour, and he dealt with it. If my hon. friend is asking me about a particular program for next winter I cannot say to him categorically that it will be studied at this particular conference. But in regard to fiscal relations, fiscal problems, as between the levels of government, certainly there is no desire on the part of the federal government to curb or restrict the extent of discussion. I do, Mr. Speaker, wish to emphasize the comprehensive nature of the studies that we are prepared to undertake jointly with the provinces in this field, because we do attach the greatest importance to it.

Mr. Argue: In view of the comprehensive nature of the conference to which the minister has referred, is he able to inform the house whether all the premiers will be in attendance at this conference?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): I have already informed the house, Mr. Speaker, as to the number of premiers who will be attending. We have been informed that there will be five premiers in attendance at the conference, three of whom are treasurers of their

[Mr. Fleming (Eglinton).]

own provinces, and two who are coming with the provincial treasurers of their provinces.

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in view of the important and comprehensive character of this conference, as emphasized by the minister, does he not feel that we would have been justified in setting aside a day or two days to discuss these special problems before the conference was held?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Mr. Speaker, if any subject has been discussed in this House of Commons until it is worn threadbare it must surely be the subject of dominion-provincial fiscal relations at this present session. It was initiated by the opposition in an amendment to a supply motion back on February 9. If I am correct in my calculation, no fewer than 10 days of the present session have been devoted to a discussion of this problem in all its various forms. What would have been accomplished by one more day of debate on it I do not quite understand; but I do point out to the hon. gentleman that the subjects, as I mentioned previously, that were submitted to the provinces for their approval, as subjects coming within the scope of review and discussion at the conference, were confidential. Until the conference releases that list from that restriction it is still a confidential document. I hope it will be possible early in the conference to make that comprehensive list available to the public, but we would have to have the permission of the provinces to release it.

Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Bonavista-Twillington): Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Has the minister forgotten that on most of the days he referred to he kept raising points of order to prevent any discussion of the conference?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Mr. Speaker, I do recall raising points of order where those points of order were fully justified.

[Later:]

Mr. Frank McGee (York-Scarborough): I wonder if the Minister of Finance would tell us whether any other members of the government besides himself will be attending the dominion-provincial conference next week?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Perhaps that question should more properly be directed to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I may say that in the preparations which naturally have taken place leading to the convening of such a conference,