

Inquiries of the Ministry

this question particularly in view of the increasing number of difficulties and complications that are being raised in connection with the white paper proposals.

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am sure my hon. friend is speaking about 1971. I have said it is an objective. It is not necessarily binding. Whether we will be able to meet this objective will depend on the speed with which the white paper is handled by the committees of the House and the Senate.

Mr. Stanfield: A supplementary question. Can the minister advise the House whether the drafting of this legislation has already commenced or can he assure the House that the drafting of the bill will not be commenced until the parliamentary committee has reported?

Mr. Benson: To my knowledge the drafting of the bill is not under way.

Mr. Stanfield: Can the minister give the House the assurance that the drafting of the bill will not commence until after the committee has reported?

Mr. Benson: Until the committees have reported it will be impossible to draft the precise bill because we are going to look at the recommendations of the committees and I suspect, take action of course, on some of those recommendations.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the minister when we may expect his proposals to overcome the difficulties which he has admitted his white paper proposals will create for small businesses, although when he recognized these difficulties he said he did not have any proposals but hoped somebody else would have. Has he discovered that somebody else has come up with proposals?

Mr. Benson: Mr. Speaker, a great many submissions have been received from individuals and organizations and these are presently being studied. As I indicated publicly, I have also asked my department to look into the financial problems of small businesses.

SOCIAL SECURITY**GOVERNMENT POLICY ON GUARANTEED ANNUAL INCOME—PUBLICATION OF WHITE PAPER**

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question

[Mr. Stanfield.]

to the Prime Minister. When Dr. Willard, the Deputy Minister of Welfare, made his statement a day or so ago to the Canadian Pension Conference to the effect that the guaranteed annual income was the best solution to our social problems, was he expressing government policy and, if so, may we expect action on a guaranteed annual income at this session of Parliament?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest that the question cannot be asked in this form. My understanding of the rule is that it is possible to ask the Prime Minister whether a minister in making a statement outside the House was expressing government policy, but I wonder whether this extends to statements made by civil servants. I think the question might be asked directly and responded to in those terms.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Prime Minister whether a guaranteed annual income is now government policy?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that all these questions, so far as the government is concerned, seem to hinge on the forthcoming white paper on social policy, will the Prime Minister do his best to expedite the publication of this white paper?

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

FINANCE**REALLOCATION OF RESOURCES—REPRESENTATIONS BY MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES TO COMMITTEE ON THE CONSTITUTION**

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Prime Minister. In light of the expression of opinion that federal observers could have participated in the present Ontario provincial-municipal conference on the allocation of financial and tax resources, is it the intention of the government of Canada to actively encourage the municipalities of Canada, with the co-operation of the provincial governments, to send official representatives to testify before the special committee on the constitution as to the needs of the municipalities in respect of a reallocation of tax and financial resources commensurate with their responsibilities in the years to come?