

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, as I said in answer to the previous question, both ministers said that they were stating a point of view. The Minister of National Defence said to the audience:

I am not going to tell you what the policy will be—we have not decided that yet. It is with the desire to stimulate discussion on matters of serious national import, that I am speaking to you this afternoon.

The Postmaster General used equivalent language. Both ministers are, as we said much earlier in this parliament, asking the Canadian people to reflect on these matters. We realize that these are very important matters and, as I just said, the government will have to arrive at a policy which will be the expression of this government, to which all ministers will then adhere and gladly support.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, in view of the answer of the right hon. gentleman, and the speech made by the military expert who doubles in brass as the Postmaster General, does the Prime Minister intend to alter the guide lines which were laid down earlier to permit the uninitiated to distinguish between cabinet dissension and participatory democracy?

Mr. Speaker: I have the impression that on a number of counts the question should not be allowed.

Mr. Robert McCleave (Halifax-East Hants): Mr. Speaker, arising out of the previous questions asked I should like to ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs which way he is facing on this "push me-pull you"?

Mr. MacLean (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether he would consider setting up an opportunity for debate in the House of Commons in the near future on these important matters of defence, so that official statements could be made by the government as to what the policy is, at least for the time being?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, there are two points I could make here. The first is that the Secretary of State for External Affairs has stated on a previous occasion that we will be publishing a white paper on our external policy, from which defence policy follows. I must also remind the opposition that this subject is before the committee now and we are very anxious to hear once again the opposition speak with one voice. Apparently they

[Mr. MacLean (Malpeque).]

are not conducting a review: They know the truth, and we would like to hear it.

While I am on my feet—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Does the Prime Minister wish to make a statement relating to the question now before the house? I understand there is at least one more supplementary question. The hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby.

Mr. J. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. Following his marxian dialectical process of reasoning, would it be reasonable now for us to infer that the government's synthesis would be for Canada to remain half in and half out of NATO?

Mr. P. V. Noble (Grey-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. Does the Prime Minister not think that this kind of kite-flying is confusing and frustrating to our friends in NATO?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps this would be the right moment for the Prime Minister to make a statement about another matter.

DOMINION-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS**CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE—ATTENDANCE OF PARTY OBSERVERS**

Right Hon. P.-E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, this is by way of answer to a question asked by the leader of the New Democratic party on Friday about the participation of observers at the dominion-provincial conference. I told him I would check on it. I now have. I want to report that the situation will be as follows.

We will have the same number of observers at this conference as we had in February last year, that is, 28 seats. One will be made available to each province. Therefore that will leave 18 for federal use. We would want to apportion these 18 seats on the same lines as last year. There would be one seat for each of the opposition party leaders, making three seats. There would be two seats for the Speakers of the two chambers, and one seat for the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate.

That would leave 12 seats remaining, which would be given to the parties according to their strength, more or less, in the House of Commons. It would be on the basis of six to the Liberals, four to the Conservatives, one to the New Democratic party and one to the