

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

Saturday, July 4, 1959

The house met at 11 a.m.

## UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE

QUEBEC—ANNOUNCEMENT OF SIGNING OF AGREEMENT

**Hon. J. W. Monteith (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I have pleasure in announcing to the house that earlier this week, on July 1, I signed on behalf of the government of Canada an agreement with the government of the province of Quebec under the provisions of the Unemployment Assistance Act. Hon. Paul Sauve, minister of social welfare and of youth of the government of the province of Quebec, has signed the agreement on behalf of that government. With the completion of this agreement the Unemployment Assistance Act is now in effect in all 10 provinces of Canada.

## DOMINION-PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE

INQUIRY AS TO ATTENDANCE OF PREMIER OF QUEBEC AND COMMENTS ON AGENDA

On the orders of the day:

**Hon. Lionel Chevrier (Laurier):** May I direct a question to the Prime Minister. May I ask him if he has been officially advised that the premier of Quebec will attend the conference on Monday?

**Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister):** I have had no official advice. I do not know if the Minister of Finance, who has been looking after this matter, has received any communication. If there was one it would naturally be to him.

**Mr. Chevrier:** I would have directed my question to the Minister of Finance in the first place, but because of his absence I directed it to the Prime Minister. Here is the Minister of Finance now, and perhaps I could direct the question to him.

In the absence of the minister I was asking the Prime Minister, and perhaps the minister will take it as directed to him, whether or not he has now been officially advised that the premier of Quebec will attend the conference on Monday?

**Hon. Donald M. Fleming (Minister of Finance):** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

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**Mr. Chevrier:** May I ask the minister whether he has received any comments from the government of Quebec on the proposed agenda for the conference?

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):** I understand not, Mr. Speaker; that will be reserved, presumably, for the conference on Monday.

**Mr. Chevrier:** May I ask a further question. Is it still the intention of the federal government that the meeting will be nothing more than a study group or seminar and that no important decisions will be taken to modify the present fiscal arrangements?

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):** That question, put in that form, completely misrepresents the scope, purpose and effect of this conference. This, Mr. Speaker, in the view of the government is a very important conference, and the importance which the government attaches to it is reflected in the preparations that have been made for it and in the broad and comprehensive scope of the matters that are to come before it.

As I have endeavoured to indicate on previous occasions, one of the difficulties that have beset the plenary dominion-provincial conferences in the past has been that each side, the dominion government on the one hand and the provinces on the other, has come to the conference with preconceived ideas and positions. There has not been a comprehensive study of the whole tax structure of this country so far as it affects both the dominion and the provinces.

This has been badly needed and it has been badly needed not simply on the basis of a dominion study but on the basis of a co-operative study. We have a federal system in this country under which provincial governments are sovereign. They have their rights; they have their powers, and they have heavy responsibilities. The federal government has its powers, its rights and its heavy responsibilities as well. The view of the government has been that if we are going to do anything effective on a long-term basis in this country to help governments at all levels to work effectively together in relation to fiscal problems, there must be a comprehensive study, and it must be undertaken on a co-operative basis.

It is our hope, Mr. Speaker, that at this conference we will be able to bring about something that has not been effectively done