

*Inquiries of the Ministry***DOMINION-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS**REPORTED ANNOUNCEMENT BY STATE  
SECRETARY OF CONFERENCE ON  
ECONOMIC DISPARITY

On the orders of the day:

**Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether the Secretary of State was announcing government policy in Winnipeg when he said that in January or February a special federal-provincial conference will be held on economic disparity.

**Right Hon. P.-E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I have not seen the statement, and I must confess I am not aware of this timetable. I imagine the minister may have been considering a meeting at the official or ministerial level rather than a full-blown federal-provincial conference.

**Mr. Stanfield:** Is it possible that the government of Canada, as the Secretary of State said in Winnipeg, considers that the Canadian constitution and economic disparity have nothing in common and that economic disparity and constitutional equity is secondary and must be preceded by linguistic ability? Does that represent government policy?

**Mr. Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, let me say again that I must see the statement to assure myself that those are exactly the words of the Secretary of State. Government policy on this has been stated many times. There is a danger to the unity of this country on a language basis, but there is also a danger on the basis of economic disparity, and it should be the intent of any federal government to seek justice in both fields.

**Mr. Stanfield:** Would the Prime Minister confer with the Secretary of State and perhaps make a statement to the house that is acceptable to the minister and the right hon. gentleman as to what is the policy of the government?

**Mr. Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, I often confer with the Secretary of State, but I have made this statement now without conferring with him as of this date. The statement is that both are extremely important; the correction of regional disparity and the correction of linguistic inequities.

**Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont):** Mr. Speaker, could the Prime Minister inform the house whether such a conference, if it does occur, will take place finally in respect of

[Mr. Baldwin.]

regional development, and whether some consideration will be given to provincial and other important bodies such as municipalities participating in such a conference?

**Mr. Trudeau:** In answer to the first part of the question I must repeat that as far as I am concerned I have no knowledge of the minister having made that particular statement. If he feels there should be a federal-provincial conference at one level or another, and if this is agreeable to the provinces, it certainly would be acceptable to this government.

**Mr. MacDonald (Egmont):** Is the Prime Minister suggesting that there is a possibility such a conference would not in fact be headed by the present minister of regional development rather than the Secretary of State?

**CONSUMER AFFAIRS**APPLICATION FOR RATE INCREASES BY  
BELL TELEPHONE

On the orders of the day:

**Mr. David Lewis (York South):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Postmaster General, who is scheduled to head up a department of communications, asking him whether in view of the record of profits by the Bell Telephone Company, which has in some years exceeded the permissive level set up by an appropriate authority, he is giving consideration to steps to oppose the application by the Bell Telephone Company for an increase in rates.

**Hon. Eric W. Kierans (Postmaster General):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Transport Commission is a court of record set up by the government and proposes to investigate the justification of such claims.

**Mr. Lewis:** Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the Canadian Transport Commission hears evidence and argument and, does review with various levels of government this evidence and argument, I should like to ask specifically whether the minister has given consideration to taking some appropriate steps to make sure that the Canadian Transport Commission is not only effective, but effective in the public interest.

**Mr. Kierans:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may be assured that the Postmaster General will follow the hearings with close attention. What action he may take is a question which he obviously cannot resolve at the present time.