

Inquiries of the Ministry

caisses populaires for personal loans (j) Canadians' debts due to installment buying (k) Canadians' debts to small loan companies (l) Canada's total debt to the United States (m) Canada's total debt to overseas governments?

Return tabled.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS****ALLEGATION RESPECTING ATTITUDE OF PROVINCIAL PREMIERS**

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Prime Minister. In view of the seriousness and importance of the charge the Prime Minister made over the weekend that the equivalent of blackmail has sometimes been resorted to too often in the past by the province of Quebec and sometimes by other premiers of other provinces, I should like to ask the Prime Minister to which premiers he was referring?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I doubt very much that a question asked in those terms is in order. I have some doubts about it. My understanding is that a question may be asked in respect of statements made outside the House to determine whether or not they represent government policy, but I am not too sure really whether the question as asked is in order.

Mr. Stanfield: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister of Canada has made a serious statement in respect of the provincial premiers generally and it seems to me it is of the greatest importance that the Prime Minister of Canada clarify this statement so that whatever slur he was casting does not fall on every premier in Canada. I suggest, with respect, that this is a matter of importance and that the Prime Minister of Canada, having made a statement like that, ought to clarify it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: Again I have the same doubts I had previously. The point made by the Leader of the Opposition is of interest, but it seems to me that the statement the Leader of the Opposition is inviting now would perhaps be better made on a question of privilege. It seems to me that the question is not one that would normally be acceptable from a procedural standpoint.

[Mr. Caouette.]

Mr. Stanfield: I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Is this the way the Prime Minister intends to proceed to prepare the way now for further constitutional consultations leading to reform of the constitution, and does the Prime Minister think a statement like this, without any clarification, is a proper way to prepare for the reform of the constitution?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): One of the proper things to do if one wants to reform the constitution in a realistic way is not to close one's eyes or ears to the fact that there has been talk in parts of Canada in respect of western separation, eastern alienation and so on. I am surprised that the Leader of the Opposition has not heard of these sentiments.

Mr. Stanfield: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I have heard very much of these statements.

An hon. Member: By whom?

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Prime Minister to tell us how he believes these attitudes to which he is referring justify his charge that the premiers have resorted to blackmail.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Trudeau: Well, Mr. Speaker, in answer to the supplementary I repeat that if one wants to deal realistically with the problem of national unity one has to take such expressions as these seriously in an effort to deal with these feelings of frustration or alienation. The Leader of the Opposition now says that he has heard very much these expressions. May I ask whom he has heard them from?

Mr. Thomas M. Bell (Saint John-Lancaster): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary. May I, as a member from New Brunswick, ask the Prime Minister if he was casting a slur on my province and saying we are guilty of blackmail?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Bell: There was a nod of the head.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**NORTH VIET NAM—RENEWED BOMBING BY UNITED STATES FORCES—CONSULTATION WITH U THANT**

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): I have a question for the Secretary of State for Exter-