

*Inquiries of the Ministry*

negotiations; and the declaration on the continued application of these schedules, be referred to the standing committee on banking and commerce.

**Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I have no desire to press this motion, but if it is the wish of hon. members to have the matter referred at once to the banking and commerce committee so that they may get fuller information about it before having any debate upon it in the house, I should be prepared to move it now. If, however, it is felt that there should be a debate before the subject matter goes to the committee, we shall have to find an appropriate occasion for such a debate.

**Mr. Drew:** I think that it would be preferable to have this matter dealt with in the ordinary way, so that there may be an opportunity to consider the extent of the discussion that should take place.

**Mr. St. Laurent:** Then it will stand.

Order stands.

**OLD AGE PENSIONS****REPRESENTATION OF PROVINCES AT DOMINION-PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE**

On the orders of the day:

**Mr. A. J. Bater (The Battlefords):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. What provinces have signified their intention to be in attendance at the conference next Monday with respect to old age pensions?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister stated last Monday that it was the intention, pursuant to the assurance given by him at the dominion-provincial conference last December, as soon as the provinces had intimated their willingness to agree to a constitutional amendment, to provide for a continuing committee to discuss the matter of old age security legislation in so far as it concerns the provinces. That day, under the Prime Minister's name, a telegram was sent to each of the provinces asking them if it would be convenient for them to attend the proposed conference on May 21. All provinces have signified their intention to attend a conference. However, the acting premier of Quebec has indicated that May 21 would not be a convenient date. As a result, his request has been communicated to the other provinces suggesting that we meet on May 23.

**Mr. Drew:** Mr. Speaker, may I ask a supplementary question? In view of the Prime Minister's statement a week ago Friday that the possibility of an amendment to the British

North America Act to provide for a three per cent turnover tax was still open to consideration, may I ask the Minister of National Health and Welfare whether there has been any indication from any of the provinces that their ability to carry out this program would be dependent upon tax resources other than those now available to them?

**Mr. Martin:** I have no such information.

**FISHERIES****CONVERTIBILITY OF STERLING FOR PURCHASE OF NEWFOUNDLAND SALT CODFISH**

On the orders of the day:

**Mr. L. T. Stick (Trinity-Conception):** I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Fisheries. On March 12 I asked the Minister of Finance a question regarding the convertibility of sterling into Canadian funds. Since then I understand the Minister of Fisheries has been looking after the matter. My question is this. The fishermen of Newfoundland are most anxious to know the results of negotiations with the government of the United Kingdom for an extension of the arrangements to sell Newfoundland salted codfish in European markets for sterling. Can the Minister of Fisheries indicate the position at this time?

**Hon. R. W. Mayhew (Minister of Fisheries):** Mr. Speaker, evidently a number of Newfoundland members were at church yesterday and offered a word of prayer that this convertibility would be a reality. In coming here today they are looking for an answer to the prayer. I am glad to be able to say that it has been effective.

**Mr. Drew:** I am glad there is one method by which we can get action from this government.

**Mr. Mayhew:** I am happy to inform the hon. member for Trinity-Conception that we have today received word from the United Kingdom, through the Department of Finance, that they have agreed to extend the arrangement for another year covering the catch of 1951, subject to an over-all ceiling of \$4 million. This will provide for sales to Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain at levels comparable to those from the 1950 catch. It will be recalled that at the time of union the United Kingdom agreed to an extension of this arrangement for one year only. Agreement to further extensions has been most helpful, particularly to Newfoundland.

This special arrangement with respect to the sale of salted cod for blocked sterling represents a temporary solution pending the more basic reorganization of the fisheries