

1943. The matter is now properly before the courts and, short of legislation, it will be for the Supreme Court of Canada to decide whether any cease and desist order should issue.

Mr. Woolliams: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I hope the Prime Minister did not mislead the House with reference to the position of the provinces. I do not believe that the province of Alberta, the province of Saskatchewan or any other western province would, because of their major primary industry being agriculture, endorse the balkanization of this country. I would hope that the Prime Minister, with his knowledge of constitutional law, would now rise and correct that misunderstanding.

Mr. Trudeau: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was asked by the opposition whether I had made this point to the provinces. My answer is yes, I did. When the hon. member talks of balkanizing Canada he may be reflecting the result of the obstructionism of his own party.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): A supplementary question to the Minister of Justice. Since the hon. gentleman has said he has not seen the legislation which is presently before the Quebec legislature, the bill which purports to give authority to set up inspection stations for agricultural products, in this case, I think, eggs, and in view of the serious repercussions this could have for the rest of Canada, would the minister undertake to secure a copy of that legislation and make a statement on motions as to what the federal government's intention is with respect to this legislation in order to prevent very serious dislocation in the movement of agricultural products across provincial boundaries?

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): I shall certainly secure a copy of the bill before the Quebec legislature, but what action the federal government could take in expressing an opinion about that bill, or expressing a constitutional view about the bill, is highly doubtful. If the measure is to be challenged, it will be challenged before the courts, and the reference from Manitoba is presently before the Supreme Court of Canada. The other alternatives are, of course, interprovincial negotiation or the type of co-ordinated marketing legislation envisaged by the Minister of Agriculture.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL DISASTERS

ST. JEAN-VIANNEY—FEDERAL ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Prime Minister.

In view of the statement he made yesterday in the House, would he tell us if the government has decided

Inquiries of the Ministry

to offer financial or other assistance to the St. Jean-Vianney victims and, if so, what kind of help will it be?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): As I said yesterday, Mr. Speaker, we will abide by the procedure in the present case. The municipality needs only to make a request to the federal government through the provincial government. To my knowledge, such a request for assistance has not yet been made. The hon. member wants, like us I think, to show consideration for the constitution and would not wish the federal government to intervene "over the head" of local authorities.

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a supplementary question.

I should like to ask the Prime Minister if, without prejudice to the constitution, he has sent an observer who would keep him informed of problems experienced by those stricken people?

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, Mr. Speaker. In addition to the observers which I mentioned yesterday, that is some members of the Canadian armed forces and officials of the Central Housing and Mortgage Corporation, I can say that the one chosen by the constituents to represent them in Ottawa, namely the member for Lapointe, has been sent on the scene.

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OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT

DELAY IN ESTABLISHMENT OF BILINGUAL DISTRICTS—DISCUSSION AT FORTHCOMING FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE

Mr. Georges Valade (Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a question to the right hon. Prime Minister.

Does he intend to defer any decision about the establishment of bilingual districts or the implementation of the Advisory Board's recommendations to a later date, that is after the prime ministers' conference next month, to allow provinces to make representations?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I understand the Secretary of State answered that question yesterday in the House when he explained that the legislation itself forbids any interference in that area before a delay of 90 days. This gets us much later than June 15 and 16.

Mr. Valade: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary.

Can the Prime Minister tell the House whether he intends to include formally this item on the agenda so that all premiers can take part in the discussion?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the matter of the agenda of the June conference is not yet settled. There are exchanges between the provinces and the federal government in order to know which items should be on the agenda. I cannot therefore answer with certainty any question on that subject.