

Inquiries of the Ministry

and to have it explained by Mr. Kent on behalf of the government?

Why was this done? Why was parliament not made aware of what the offer was going to be, particularly in view of the fact that it was announced to the press by the Prime Minister before it was given to the provincial representatives? Does this mean that parliament is to be treated as a kind of rubber stamp?

Hon. Paul Martin (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, what was done, in so far as announcing government policy by the Prime Minister to a conference with the provinces is concerned, does not represent the establishment of a precedent. That precedent has long been established, and my right hon. friend is among those prime ministers who have helped to make this a well established practice. I can think of nothing that would be more inimical to the negotiations that are under way between the federal government and the provinces than to have the kind of disclosure my right hon. friend is suggesting parliament should have been given in detail.

Mr. Diefenbaker: It wasn't given in any particular.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): As to the course that the Prime Minister followed in the press release beforehand, I think that in this instance the Prime Minister observed the well known technique of which my right hon. friend was perhaps the best exponent during the time he was prime minister. I can think of three occasions when this was done.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Never once was it revealed before the conference met.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): My right hon. friend says that.

Mr. Diefenbaker: That is right.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): My right hon. friend may not like the answers I am giving, but those are the replies I want to give.

Mr. Diefenbaker: This is another example of the Acting Prime Minister rewriting history, as he did a moment ago when he said Pym was a republican—he died, as a matter of fact, in 1643. There was no question of it then. This is another case of rewriting history. He was so far out it was frightful, but rewriting history is not unusual for him. I ask him, what justification was there to reveal this information to a press conference before the meeting of the dominion-provincial

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

conference and before parliament knew about it? What is the excuse for this?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): My right hon. friend says once again that I am seeking to rewrite history.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Absolutely.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): That may be a distinction between my right hon. friend and myself.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I write and you rewrite.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I have already given the reply. What the Prime Minister did was perfectly proper.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Never.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): My right hon. friend did it constantly.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Never.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): And so did everyone else. In the interest of prosecuting the federal side on this matter it would have been unwise to resort to any other course.

Mr. Diefenbaker: On a question of privilege, never at any time when I was prime minister, or prior thereto, did I or any other prime minister reveal in advance of a dominion-provincial conference what he was going to tell them and explain it. This statement so far as I am concerned is as full of errors as the hon. gentleman's reference to history regarding John Pym.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam.

[Translation]

Mr. Grégoire: Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask a supplementary question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member will have the opportunity in a moment to ask a question. I have the impression that, for the last few minutes, we have been witnessing a fight between giants and I think that we should now consider another matter.

I will soon give the floor to the hon. member for Lapointe so that he may ask a question.

[Later:]

Mr. Gilles Grégoire (Lapointe): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Prime