

*Inquiries of the Ministry*

which have been asked by my colleagues. Would the Prime Minister consider setting aside a day for the purpose of discussing some of the matters that might be presented before the provincial treasurers and ministers of finance in order to enable us in Ottawa to know in general what views the Minister of Finance will express on behalf of the government of Canada?

**Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister):** I notice that the hon. gentleman is reading from *Hansard*, and I seem to recollect that the answer given at the time was that there was no necessity of that being done. Nothing was done to achieve the suggestion contained in the question, and having regard to the amount of discussion which has already taken place on this subject—ten days during this session, the Minister of Finance points out—I am sure that every view that could possibly be canvassed has been canvassed to date.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** Does the Prime Minister mean by that reply that he now thinks Mr. St. Laurent was right in his answer at that time?

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** I am not going to enter into controversy with a right hon. gentleman who is no longer a member of the house.

**Hon. Lionel Chevrier (Laurier):** May I ask the Minister of Finance a question arising out of the answer he gave to the Leader of the Opposition. In that answer he said there was no hard and fast agenda which had been submitted, but that on the other hand there was a comprehensive report which had been prepared by the Minister of Finance. Has that comprehensive report been sent out to those who are attending the conference and, second is federal aid to universities one of the subjects referred to?

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):** The document to which I referred in my earlier statement this morning went out to all the provincial treasurers some weeks ago, and their comments were invited as to whether they thought it would furnish an acceptable agenda for the conference. The contents of the document were confidential, and the document has not been released from that category.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** Can the minister indicate whether, if most of the provincial governments have indicated their acceptance of this proposed agenda, those which have done so include the government of the province of Quebec?

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):** I have not seen the communications, if any, which have come in within the last two days, and of course the government offices are closed today, so

my answer must not be taken as being complete up to this moment. I do not think the province of Quebec has yet made any comment on the scope of the proposed list of topics.

**Mr. Martin (Essex East):** In view of the fact that some provincial premiers have indicated formally or in some way their intention of attending this conference, may I ask the minister if he draws any special conclusion from the fact that the premier of Quebec, announcing his decision to come, has not advised the government of his intention to do so?

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):** I do not think I would draw any conclusion from that except that the present government does not question the right of any provincial government to make its own selection. It may not be easy for the hon. gentleman to realize that the present federal government does not attempt to dictate to the provinces in any shape or form.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** Just to the C.B.C.

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):** I can only ask hon. gentlemen opposite to realize that within the last two years times have changed.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Martin (Essex East):** In view of the very illuminating reply we have just received and the assurance that this government does not dictate to the provinces, may I ask the Minister of Finance if that means that hereafter there will no longer be telegrams sent advising the provinces what the government proposed to do in the matter of dominion-provincial relations, without consulting the provinces?

**Mr. Speaker:** The questions are taking on the attributes of the debate which was suggested earlier, and might be concluded at this point unless the Minister of Finance feels it necessary to reply to the last contribution.

**Mr. Martin (Essex East):** I think that ought to be answered.

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):** I am happy to answer the question asked by the hon. gentleman. The government will take advantage of the usual channels of communication in order to communicate to the provinces the good news of the more generous treatment they are receiving on the part of the present government.

[*Later:*]

**Mr. Pickersgill:** Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Prime Minister. In view of the statement made by the Minister of Finance about the more generous treatment being given to the provinces could