

Columbia River Agreement

of the question. But the motion before the house now is whether this is a question of urgent national importance that requires immediate debate. The Leader of the Opposition—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that generally speaking the hon. member for Essex East expresses the correct view, that what we are trying to determine is whether there is urgency of debate, and not to go into the issue surrounding the circumstances in which the statement was made and all the details which might be appropriate if debate were allowed.

Mr. Green: With effect from the year 1956, Mr. Speaker, all appointments to the Canadian section of the international joint commission have been renewed annually—

Mr. Chevrier: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Green: —and that was when the Leader of the Opposition was the secretary of state for external affairs—

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, on the point of order—

Mr. Pickersgill: The minister is persisting.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have heard the point of order. I would think that in view of the statement made by the Leader of the Opposition an answer to the allegation that the chairman was dismissed or discharged must be appropriate, even though that statement was irrelevant to the main issue.

Mr. Hellyer: The question is the urgency of debate.

Mr. Pearson: On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, I made a statement quoting what General McNaughton himself had said—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pearson: —and I said that the government itself had already denied that statement. Now the Secretary of State for External Affairs rises and denies it again. But General McNaughton has denied what the minister has said; he has said that he was dismissed by the arbitrary decision of a dictator.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Leader of the Opposition has had his turn, and I would like to hear the Secretary of State for External Affairs. I consider it permissible for him to indicate the disagreement with the view expressed by the Leader of the Opposition.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Green: In General McNaughton's case provision has been made each year since his 65th birthday, in 1952, when the Leader of the Opposition was secretary of state for external affairs—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Green: —to provide for continuation of his employment in the public service by means of an annual extension prior to his birthday.

As the house is aware, all Canadian judges retire at the age of 75. In the Canadian section of the international joint commission—

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker on a point of order—

Some hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think the hon. member's point is well taken. It is not permissible to debate the issue. If the Secretary of State for External Affairs would confine himself to the facts of termination, if it has come about, of the chairman's employment and not debate it, I would consider it relevant.

Mr. Green: Mr. Speaker, in the international joint commission Mr. Lucien Dansereau's term expired last year shortly after he reached the age of 75 years—

Mr. Martin (Essex East): On a point of order—

Mr. Pickersgill: A flagrant violation of the rules.

Some hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. member feels aggrieved that the comment is broader than it should have been and is not correct, perhaps I would be prepared to allow him to make an explanation to correct it, but I cannot find the Secretary of State for External Affairs out of order from phrase to phrase.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Jones: What arrogance.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Essex East.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, what the Secretary of State for External Affairs is doing is seeking to deal with the circumstances of the retirement of General McNaughton, which is not in issue. When I raised this as a point of order a few moments ago Your Honour said that I was justified, in other words indicating to the Secretary of State for External Affairs that he was out of order. The issue before us is clear; is it a matter that requires urgency of debate? That is the only issue before the house now. If the Secretary of State for External Affairs wishes to bring himself in order he should address himself to that question and to no other.