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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS = AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES

Attention was focussed on the Turks and Caicos Islands in January 1974, with the introduction by Max Saltsman (NDP Waterloo) of a Private Member's bill calling for the House of Commons to establish a study committee to examine the feasibility of a political or economic union between Canada and these particular islands. This bill followed a trip to the Turks and Caicos in August 1973 by a delegation that included Messrs Macquarrie, Knowles, Dupras, Trudel and Saltsman. Mr. Macquarrie later (March 1974) called for the creation of a special joint committee to study the question of a closer relationship. During this time Canadian television crews and newspapermen descended on the Turks and Caicos, discovered support for the idea and by their presence and interest, induced some of the islanders to believe that association was a practical and imminent possibility. A campaign for association with Canada was led in the islands by then Minister for Tourism and Development, Liam Maguire, an expatriate Englishman with tourism interests, and in Canada by R.B. Whiting of Ottawa, a retired Air Commodore and President of the Turks and Caicos Canadian Association. Support for association in the Turks and Caicos was based on the expectation that it would promote a cornucopia of Canadian aid, private investment and jobs.

A number of letters were received at that time from Canadians concerning the proposed association. Correspondence ran heavily in favour of association, the main rationale being a winter resort for Canadians which would not be a drain on our balance of payments. Some discussed a need to help the islands. For the most part, the press adopted a jocular and mocking tone in commenting on the issue.

Following the introduction of Mr. Saltsman's bill, the Secretary of State for External Affairs and the Prime Minister received letters from the Honourable Headley D. Durham, Senior Elected Member of the State Council of the Turks and Caicos Islands, advising of a petition passed unanimously by the elected members of the State Council and addressed to the British Government. The petition requested the right to seek association with Canada and asked for British Government assistance in bringing association about.

EXEMPT S. 15(1)