

THE SENATE

Thursday, May 6, 1965

The Senate met at 3 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair.

Prayers.

DOCUMENTS TABLED

Hon. John J. Connolly tabled:

Report to Parliament of the Auditor on the Accounts of the Canadian National Railway System for the year ended December 31, 1964, pursuant to section 40 of the Canadian National Railways Act, chapter 29, Statutes of Canada, 1955. (English and French texts).

Copies of correspondence between the Prime Minister of Canada and the Premiers of the Provinces, during the period of November 30, 1964 to April 9, 1965, concerning the agenda and procedures for the Federal-Provincial Conference proposed for May 31, 1965. (English and French texts).

EDUCATION

QUESTION OF JURISDICTION TO SIGN TREATIES—NOTICE OF INQUIRY

Hon. Jean-François Pouliot: Honourable senators, I wish to give oral notice of an inquiry which I intend to make on Tuesday next. It is as follows:

Whereas, in virtue of the B.N.A. Act, the provinces have exclusive jurisdiction concerning education, does the Government of Canada have exclusive jurisdiction for signing treaties with foreign countries concerning education, and, if so, in virtue of what authority?

COMMONWEALTH RELATIONS

MOTION TO EMPOWER COMMITTEE TO MAKE INQUIRY—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Gunnar S. Thorvaldson moved, pursuant to notice:

That the Standing Committee on External Relations be authorized to inquire into the question of Commonwealth relationships with particular reference to the position of Canada within the Commonwealth;

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That the Committee have power to send for persons, papers and records, and to sit during sittings and adjournments of the Senate; and

That the Committee be instructed to report to the House from time to time.

He said: Honourable senators, for some time views have been expressed in this house to the effect that the Standing Committee on External Relations might serve a beneficial purpose by taking under advisement some phase of Canada's external relationships. There exist now many of these relationships in regard to the United Nations organization and its many agencies, as well as innumerable others in most parts of the world.

There are three main reasons for selecting the topic contained in the motion now before us. Firstly, by virtue of the size, wealth, geography and growing strength of Canada as a nation, it is one of the senior partners of this grouping of nations referred to as the Commonwealth. Secondly, I am assured that there are in many circles in Canada, including the universities, a growing interest in the question of just what our ever-changing Commonwealth relationships consist of, and how they can be translated into greater usefulness in a disorderly world. Thirdly, we in this age are prone to forget that the form and structure of the Commonwealth which emerged after the First World War, and resulted from the enactment of the Statute of Westminster in 1931, resulted from ideas developed in Canada and which were so ably put forward at various Imperial Conferences by three Canadian Prime Ministers, namely, Borden, Meighen and King.

In this regard may I remind the house that although the Statute of Westminster applied only to Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the Irish Free State and Newfoundland, nevertheless after the Second World War, in 1947 and 1948, India, Pakistan and Ceylon, by distinct Acts similar in principle to the Statute of Westminster, became members of the Commonwealth as it was then constituted. The point I am making here is that the terms under which these three countries joined the Commonwealth in 1947 and 1948 were identical in principle with those of the Statute of Westminster.

One thing seems clear, however, that Canada plays a most important role in the sphere of Commonwealth relationships, and it may be of considerable value for Canadians to put on display in the manner proposed in this