

Supply—Privy Council

the council recognizes as being eligible for grants and I wonder whether the Prime Minister could give us any information on this point.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I cannot see any opportunity to discuss this question on the item under consideration. The hon. gentleman was very fair in his presentation of the situation, which he seems to fully realize.

I have been thinking this matter over since the occasion some time ago when it was raised by the hon. member, and while there is every endeavour to maintain the council, under all circumstances, free from any considerations which might imply political interference of any kind whatsoever, I suggest that at the next session an opportunity might be given for such a discussion. I say this because I am sure that the hon. member is not anxious to start an investigation of this matter at this time although, if he is, I am sure hon. members would immediately fall into line and would say they would be very much in favour of so doing. However, at the next session I would suggest that the annual report be submitted to a committee of the house.

I feel that the viewpoint of the hon. gentleman is one which deserves consideration and I, for one, would be willing to agree, if the house consents, to the setting up of a committee to consider the annual report of the council, which I think would be beneficial to all.

Mr. Fisher: I would like to thank the Prime Minister for his remarks. This is a matter which may not be of great importance to many members, but I do think this would give an opportunity to those of us who are interested to find out more about the council.

Item agreed to.

Special—

311. To provide for the expenses of the royal commission on energy policies including the payment, notwithstanding the Civil Service Act, of honoraria or allowances as may be authorized by the treasury board to officers, clerks or employees permanently employed in the civil service for services rendered by them to the commission, \$250,000.

Mr. Pearson: I wonder if I could ask the Prime Minister, although I know he has dealt with this matter previously, if he could give us any more recent indication of the date when this royal commission on energy policies is likely to make its interim report and how long he thinks the work of the commission will extend beyond the date of that particular report? I am quite sure that the chairman of the commission is anxious to bring his work to a conclusion at as early a date as possible.

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Mr. Diefenbaker: I regret that I cannot furnish the Leader of the Opposition with any information in addition to that already given. As the committee knows, the public hearings began in Calgary in February and subsequent hearings were held in Victoria, Regina, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto and Montreal. In view of the urgency attaching to the current problems of the petroleum industry, including natural gas, the commission decided it would concentrate in the first instance on those sections of its terms of reference dealing with these subjects.

The public hearings terminated in Montreal on July 23. Further hearings of the commission, as I have already said, I believe, on one occasion in answer to the hon. gentleman, will begin in the early fall of this year, or the beginning of the new year. I am not saying that this is when the resumption will take place, but in the meantime it is hoped that a report on the above mentioned subjects will be ready by this fall.

Very intensive study is being given to the problem, which is one which has brought about a very large number of submissions by representative bodies across the country, including oil and gas conservation boards, petroleum companies, oil companies and others. In general, in those provinces where the commission has met, a very great many representations have been made because of the intricate nature of the problem and the need for representations to be made in order to provide a sound basis for the expansion and development of the oil industry, which has become one of the major producing industries in Canada.

I can only say to the Leader of the Opposition that the fullest consideration will be given to the interim report. Once that report is furnished, then parliament will be in a position to give that consideration to the problems which the basic information and the recommendations of the commission will make possible.

Mr. Pearson: May I just ask the Prime Minister whether I understood him correctly to say that when the interim report has been completed there would be an opportunity for parliament to discuss it even though the final report might not be ready?

Mr. Diefenbaker: At the moment I can see no reason why there should not be discussion of that, because in securing an interim report the desire of the government is to have solid research information available to the end that problems of immediate incidence and importance may receive the earliest attention on the part of parliament.

Mr. Herridge: I just want to bring one matter to the attention of the Prime Minister