

Proposals to Extend Territorial Waters

Similar comments were made by the minister at other times. I do not need to read them but shall merely make passing reference to them. They are contained in *Hansard* of January 29 of this year and July 11, 1961, during the last session, when the minister said substantially the same sort of thing. He said that the matter was being considered and actively pursued but that it would not be wise, beneficial or proper to disclose what those negotiations were all about.

I can accept the suggestion that such might be the case in this or any other matter. I can understand that it might not be considered to be judicious at one particular moment to disclose the contents of the discussions or the negotiations which are taking place between Canada and other countries. But nowhere in any of the statements of the Secretary of State for External Affairs is there any indication that any negotiations are taking place. Nowhere does he say that negotiations are taking place. Nowhere does he use the word "negotiations". He refers merely to developments, to consideration of the matter and to the pursuing of it by Canada, thus leaving the impression that negotiations are and have been taking place; but nowhere does he actually say so.

I submit that what has happened here is that no negotiations have been taking place, that no discussions between Canada and other countries have been taking place specifically at the initiation of this government, and that the real reason why the minister says he cannot disclose this information is hidden in the fact that he makes no comment whatsoever about negotiations and about whether or not they are taking place. I submit that the real reason is that there are no documents to be tabled or to be filed and that this is just another indication of the super secrecy in which the government operates when in effect it has been caught with its pants down on a vitally important issue such as this one. I submit that if we are given an indication that negotiations are taking place, if this commitment can be made,—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before the hon. member proceeds further with that line of argument I think I should say to him that my view of the scope of the motion is that it is limited to the desirability of the production of the documents. The motion is one calling on the government to produce the documents referred to in the motion. The question in issue is whether or not they should be produced. Production of them has been objected to. It would be relevant to debate whether or not the grounds of objection were sufficient but in my view it would not be relevant to

[Mr. Howard.]

debate what the government should be doing about the breadth of international waters. That is another issue. The hon. member recognizes that the matter before the house is a narrow one. I hope we shall not turn this discussion into a debate as to what should be the course of the government in these international negotiations but rather that we can keep it confined to the question of whether the documents exist, if you will, or whether they should be produced.

Mr. Howard: Without hesitation I accept Your Honour's suggestion. I am sure you will appreciate the fact that as this is the first debate of this type as a result of the provisional rules, it is perhaps fairly easy to wander a bit afield from the normal practice. I say that it is vitally important that the house and the country know what the government is doing. That is why these documents including telegrams, letters and so on, if there are any in existence, should be tabled, namely in order that parliament at least and the country as a whole will have knowledge of what is taking place and so that this matter may not be shrouded, as I indicated earlier, in that extreme degree of super secrecy that surrounds so many matters in which the government is or is not engaging.

Hon. Gordon Churchill (Minister of Veterans Affairs): You have already, Mr. Speaker, dealt with one point that I had intended to raise, namely the irrelevancy of the hon. member for Skeena in dealing with the question of whether or not negotiations are taking place. His sole request here is for the production of papers. The rules provide for this type of request or motion in order that people engaged in public affairs may have, when it is possible for them to do so, the documents which relate to those public affairs. However, in this particular instance I would draw your attention to what is being asked for. The motion, which I shall not read, is asking for a copy of all correspondence, telegrams, and other documents exchanged between the government or any agency, department, or branch thereof, and any other government since April 1, 1960, relating to the particular topic under discussion. May I indicate to you, Mr. Speaker, what was said by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Green), in the answer he gave on February 7, 1962, with regard to this proposal. As found at page 631 of *Hansard* he stated as follows:

There is very good reason why we cannot comply with this request. It is important that nothing be said or done which might prejudice the significance