

Columbia River Agreement

Mr. Speaker:—which might help to clarify the situation. As I see the importance of the statement of the Canadian chairman of the international joint commission, it is in relation to the Columbia treaty; and that treaty, as hon. members of the house know, has been signed but has not yet been ratified. As I recall the questions asked and statements made in this house about ratification, it is in my mind that the house was assured that no ratification would take place before the house had been asked to debate the treaty. Now, if that is the case, what does the Leader of the Opposition say as to the urgency of debate, if no action is to be taken with respect to the subject matter of the chairman's statement until the house has an opportunity to debate the treaty?

Mr. Pearson: Well, Mr. Speaker, surely the importance of the statements and the requirement for immediate discussion of them are not the same as the discussion which is required of the whole treaty. The Prime Minister has already stated this session that there will be no such discussion of this treaty in this house until all arrangements are made and agreement reached with the government of British Columbia. The importance of having an immediate discussion on this matter attaches to statements made by General McNaughton in respect of the policy of this government and the procedure of this government in relation to this treaty. When statements of this kind are made, irrespective of the merits or demerits of the treaty itself, surely that should be discussed immediately as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Nugent: It is because of his age; he is 75.

Hon. Howard C. Green (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, this question comes under my jurisdiction as the minister responsible for the Canadian section of the international joint commission. I may add that throughout my whole term as Secretary of State for External Affairs, General McNaughton and I have worked together in a thoroughly friendly and co-operative way. His retirement from the commission results solely from the fact that he has passed the age of 75 years.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Graffey: You said he was dismissed.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I trust that the minister will not discuss the question of the termination of the employment of the chairman, because that is not the matter which the house is asked to debate, but rather a statement made by the chairman. I would not think it relevant, as I indicated to the Leader

[Mr. Pugh.]

of the Opposition, to discuss the circumstances of his employment or his position as chairman unless the request for leave to debate this matter were broader.

Mr. Green: Mr. Speaker, may I point out to you that the Leader of the Opposition charged today that General McNaughton has been dismissed.

An hon. Member: That is right.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Green: And they say, "Hear, hear" now. Surely Your Honour is not going to hold that I cannot say anything about that.

Mr. Pickersgill: If leave is granted, you can.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I certainly would not think of preventing the minister from responding to that statement, but I rose as soon as the statement was made to check further comment on that line, and I trust the minister will limit himself to dealing with the question raised.

Mr. Green: That is what I intend to do, Mr. Speaker. This statement was made, the Liberal party have shouted, "Hear, hear" and that has gone on the record. I wish to deal with that.

Mr. Pickersgill: Then let us have a debate.

Mr. Green: I repeat, Mr. Speaker, that his retirement from the commission results solely from the fact that he has passed the age of 75 years, and has nothing whatever to do with the Columbia river issue or any other issue with which the commission has dealt.

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

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Essex East (Mr. Martin) has risen on a point of order.

Hon. Paul Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Secretary of State for External Affairs will agree that he has had an opportunity to deny the statement in the remarks which Your Honour has allowed him to make with regard to the circumstances of dismissal.

Mr. Jones: What arrogance.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): The issue before the house is a simple one, whether or not under our rules and practices this question is of such urgency that it requires immediate debate. If we decide it is, as I respectfully believe we should, we would then have an opportunity to hear from the Secretary of State for External Affairs in great detail on the point he is making and on other aspects