

Oral Questions

the Canada Labour Relations Council at a time when labour was participating.

I would also indicate that we hope to have discussions of this nature on a broader basis in the context of the discussions that we are having in June with the Canadian Labour Congress. I imagine this question will be brought up along with other matters across the whole broad front of social and economic considerations.

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HUMAN RIGHTS

DATE OF RATIFICATION OF UNITED NATIONS COVENANT

Hon. Robert Stanbury (York-Scarborough): Mr. Speaker, last week I asked the Secretary of State for External Affairs about Canadian ratification of the United Nations covenant on human rights which is now ten years old. He replied that he had sent a telegram to the last of the provinces requesting agreement to this ratification. I wonder whether he would now report on any answer to that telegram and confirm whether or not Canada can now finally ratify that covenant?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to advise the House that consultations with all provinces have now been completed and that Canada's instruments of accession to the international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights, the international convention on civil and political rights and to the latter's optional protocol will be deposited with United Nations headquarters in New York tomorrow, Wednesday, May 19.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, may I just add that our becoming party to these extremely important international human rights instruments will enable us to play a still more active role internationally in the human rights field and will moreover strengthen our credibility in urging other states also to become parties and to implement their provisions.

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● (1430)

CRIMINAL CODE

SUGGESTED REMOVAL OF PROVISION ABOLISHING CAPITAL PUNISHMENT FOR TREASON AND OTHER OFFENCES FROM BILL C-84

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. Everyone knows my view respecting capital punishment for murder. The bill that is before the House, on which we can get no answers while it is before us, provides not only for abolition of capital punishment for murder, but added thereto as well is abolition of capital punishment for high treason, for killing or attempting to kill Her Majesty, and other offences such as using force or violence for the purpose of overthrowing the government of Canada or of a province. In view of the security situation at the Olympics,

which must be serious when the estimated expenditure by Canada is to be some \$90 million, and this would indicate that security there is regarded as very insecure, will the Prime Minister consider removing these sections from the bill that is before the House, namely Bill C-84, because to remove the punishment for offences to which I have referred could not be but an inducement to the commission of lawlessness during the Olympics?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Diefenbaker: I am passing this on most seriously as I know that many members are deeply concerned that those sections regarding treason and the violent offences should not be dealt with at this time, but the law should remain as it is now in that regard until December 31, 1977.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the number of various amendments which can be proposed when this matter reaches the committee would include the one suggested by the right hon. member. I put it to him that many abolitionists in general would be retentionists in particular, and this is the case with much of the correspondence I have received from people who do not like capital punishment but feel it should be kept in this or that case. In the case of the right hon. gentleman, he is concerned, and rightfully so, with the overthrow of the government of the nation, and he added, by unlawful means.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: Other people are concerned with other forms of crime which, to use his words, would be induced by the abolition of capital punishment. Surely, that is the essence of the debate. On this side we have taken the position, in so far as this bill is a government bill to be voted on freely, that you are an abolitionist or you are not, and if you are an abolitionist you should not start making particular exceptions, because the list would grow indefinitely.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Diefenbaker: In answer to the Prime Minister I would say this—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: Ten o'clock.

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, such frivolity is scarcely in keeping with the seriousness of this subject.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Diefenbaker: I suggest this to the Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker. No matter what amendments take place in the committee, the bill that will be voted on on second reading is the one that is before the House and it includes these terms. I suggest that in order to make it possible for a clear vote that these particular sections be removed, particularly in view of the danger—

Some hon. Members: Order, order.