

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, February 26, 1965

The house met at 11 a.m.

DOMINION-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS

TABLING OF CORRESPONDENCE ON JURISDICTION RESPECTING OFFSHORE MINERAL RIGHTS

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the correspondence with the provinces, and the replies from those provinces that have replied, on the government's proposal to make a reference to the supreme court on offshore minerals.

[Later:]

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Harold E. Winch (Vancouver East): I should like to direct a question to the Prime Minister. If perchance I have missed any statement on this matter, I apologize. However, in view of the importance of the subject and the necessity for clarifying the situation I should like to ask this question of the Prime Minister. In view of the reported stand of Premier Lesage of Quebec that the matter of jurisdiction over offshore natural resource rights should not be submitted to the Supreme Court of Canada, what action is contemplated by the federal government, since this matter is of major and immediate concern to many provinces other than Quebec?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): We are proceeding with a reference to the supreme court on this matter. We hoped it would be an agreed reference with all the provinces. If that is not possible, we will proceed with a reference from the federal government.

IMMIGRATION

INQUIRY RESPECTING TABLING OF CORRESPONDENCE IN STONEHILL CASE

On the orders of the day:

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a couple of questions to the Prime Minister in connection with the Stonehill case.

The first is this. The Prime Minister said yesterday that he had not been able to get permission from the premier of British Columbia to table the correspondence. He will no doubt have read in the press the reported statement by the premier in the legislature yesterday that this was a falsehood. I am sure the Prime Minister will be able to clarify the situation concerning the statement made by the premier of the province in this regard, because it is one with regard to which the House of Commons will want a full explanation. There must be some reason for the discrepancy between the statement made by the Prime Minister and the observation thereon of the premier of British Columbia.

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to deal with that question and other questions that have been asked in the house on the same matter. As I indicated yesterday in reply to a question asked by the hon. member for Vancouver East, I was prepared to table correspondence between the government of British Columbia and the government of Canada arising out of a letter received by a member of my staff concerning the Stonehill case and signed "W. A. C. Bennett".

I had not until yesterday received any reaction from the government of British Columbia regarding our request for agreement that this correspondence could be tabled. My first telegram requesting this agreement was sent on February 18, to which I have yet had no reply. My colleague the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration at my request sent a further telegram to Mr. Budd in Premier Bennett's office on February 24, saying that if he did not hear to the contrary he would assume that the provincial government had no objection to the tabling of the correspondence. There has been no reply to that telegram.

Not having heard from the premier, I did not wish to take a negative response if I could get a positive response. We put in another telephone call to ascertain whether the telegram had been received and, Mr. Speaker, we were assured, or the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration was assured that there would be a reply to his earlier call. No reply was received either in writing or by telephone.