

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, April 27, 1956

The house met at eleven o'clock.

BANKING AND COMMERCE

Fourth report of standing committee on banking and commerce.—Mr. Viau.

STORMS

NICOLET, QUE.—CORRESPONDENCE RESPECTING
LANDSLIDE

On the orders of the day:

Mr. J. E. Lefrançois (Laurier): I should like to direct two questions to the Minister of Public Works. The first one is this: Has the Minister of Public Works had any correspondence or other communications with the government of the province of Quebec concerning the landslide which took place in the town of Nicolet in the fall of 1955?

The second one is this: If in the affirmative, would the minister consent to table such communications?

Hon. Robert H. Winters (Minister of Public Works): Yes, there has been an exchange of correspondence. Some of it has been on a personal basis and as such is not producible; but any other correspondence I shall be glad to produce, subject to the usual reservation that I shall first inform the government of Quebec.

TRADE

CEYLON—REPORTED WITHDRAWAL FROM GATT
AND RENOUNCING OF EMPIRE PREFERENCE

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Donald M. Fleming (Eglinton): May I ask the Minister of Trade and Commerce if he is now in a position to answer the question I asked him on Tuesday? It is recorded on page 3209 of *Hansard* and is as follows:

May I ask the Minister of Trade and Commerce whether his attention has been called to reports from Ceylon that the government of that country is considering withdrawing from GATT and also denouncing the system of empire trade preferences. Has the department formed any opinion as to the effect this may have on Canada's trade interests?

Right Hon. C. D. Howe (Minister of Trade and Commerce): I have a reply to that question. The Associated Press item, which was in the *Ottawa Journal* of April 23, in which

the minister of industries in Ceylon is reported as having stated that he will re-examine the GATT and preferential tariff obligations of Ceylon, has now been brought to my attention. It is likely that if the Ceylon government has any specific proposals to make in this connection they will inform us officially. In the meantime we are asking our high commissioner in Colombo to report fully on this matter. Until we have more complete information it will not be possible to assess the effect which this might have upon Canada's foreign trade.

RUSSIA—INQUIRY AS TO EXTENSION OF LIST OF
EXPORTABLE COMMODITIES

On the orders of the day:

Mr. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): I should like to ask the Minister of Trade and Commerce whether the Canadian government has in mind the extension of the list of commodities that may be exported to the U.S.S.R. in view of the added commodities that were announced yesterday by the United States government and I think also by the British government?

Right Hon. C. D. Howe (Minister of Trade and Commerce): The Canadian list will be expanded to the extent that the United States list is expanded. Our system of area export permits is somewhat different from the United States system in that we do not require a licence for every specific commodity. We issue licences for a group of commodities, none of which are strategic. The relaxations announced in Washington do not affect strategic commodities and many of the commodities on the new list were already on our list as permissible for export. However, I can assure my hon. friend that we will make such changes as will make our list as broad as the United States list.

Mr. Coldwell: May I ask the minister this question? Is there not some discretion exercised by Canada as to the removal of articles from the strategic list? Have we always got to follow what the United States does?

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): No, and it has not been our practice to follow the United States. As I have said, our present list is considerably broader than has been the United States list. The United States is really catching up to our present practice, although we may need to somewhat extend our list.