

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Diefenbaker: As to the statement of the hon. member for Assiniboia, I am not going to read into the record a report that he allegedly gave to Mr. Robert Moon on August 8 to the effect that as far as this government was concerned it was apparently not bringing in any agricultural legislation, having an undesirable end in view in taking that step. I will not read that into the record because I cannot accept such words as appear in the *Regina Leader-Post*, and attributed as a direct quotation by the hon. gentleman, as representative of his views. However, in so far as the agricultural program is concerned, I assure the hon. gentleman that the matter is receiving continual consideration. As a matter of fact, the absence of the minister from the house in the last two, three or four days has been in consequence of very serious and lengthy consideration of such proposals as will be beneficial not only to agriculture but to Canadians generally.

Mr. McIlraith: There was some important business in the house as well.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see my hon. friend's interest in that regard.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**ICELAND—EXTENSION OF FISHING LIMITS FOR FOREIGN TRAWLERS**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. H. J. Robichaud (Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Secretary of State for External Affairs may I direct a question to the Prime Minister. In view of the British admiralty's recent decision to augment its fishery protection squadron of two frigates and two minesweepers as a precaution against incidents with Icelanders who intend to enforce the extension of their territorial waters from 4 miles to 12 miles as from September 1, and in view of the Prime Minister's previous statement to the effect that his government was proposing that national jurisdiction be extended 12 miles offshore only in regard to fisheries matters, can the Prime Minister inform the house what action, if any, has been taken by the Canadian government to approve or support Iceland's decision or to protest against this alleged violation of the international law of the sea?

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it is very obvious that this is not a question for the orders of the day. It is a very lengthy question and one that would require an equally lengthy answer. I submit it is not one that comes within the purview of the orders of the day.

[Mr. Benidickson.]

Mr. Robichaud: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Can the Prime Minister inform the house whether any action has been taken by the government to protest against Iceland's decision?

Mr. Speaker: The question seems to be a familiar one. It seems to me I have dealt with it twice before during this session. Whether it is limited to any action since the question was last asked I do not know. If so, I suppose it would be in order.

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition): On that point, Mr. Speaker, only this morning there appeared in the press a report to the effect that the United Kingdom and certain other members of NATO were going to take action to protect their fishing vessels inside an area which is now claimed by Iceland as territorial waters. This is a matter of great importance which I think should be occupying the attention of the government and which should be brought before the NATO council at its next session.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I can say that this matter has been before NATO, and the hon. member is fully aware of that fact.

Mr. Pearson: This is a new development.

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY**ROYAL COMMISSION ON ENERGY—REQUEST FOR INTERIM REPORT ON OIL AND GAS**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Hazen Argue (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I have a question I should like to direct to the Prime Minister. Is the Prime Minister now in a position to say whether or not an interim report will be made by the Borden commission dealing with petroleum and natural gas and what action, if any, may arise from this report?

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, in so far as the latter part of the question is concerned I know the hon. gentleman does not expect an answer now. As to the first part of his question, namely when an interim report may be expected from the Borden commission, I had the chairman communicated with and he advised, as he said at the time of the adjournment of the sittings of the commission, that it is the intention of the commission to make an interim or preliminary report with respect to certain aspects of the gas and oil industry. On that occasion—that was July 22—he was unable to state exactly when the report could be expected. However, he said that it will require a great deal of consideration and deliberation and that he is hopeful