

Inquiries of the Ministry

[English]

CORRESPONDENCE RESPECTING FORT NO. 1,
LAUZON, QUE.

Motion No. 211—Mr. Caouette:

That an order of the house do issue for a copy of all correspondence exchanged between the city of Lauzon, the school board and any other body, Mr. Raynald Guay, M.P. (Lévis), and all departments concerned with regard to Fort No. 1 in Lauzon.

Motion agreed to.

DUCK LAKE, B.C.—DEVELOPMENT AS
WATERFOWL SANCTUARY

Motion No. 213—Mr. Herridge:

That an humble address be presented to His Excellency praying that he will cause to be laid before this house a copy of all communications exchanged between the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the minister of recreation and conservation, or any officials of his department, of the province of British Columbia, with respect to the development of Duck lake as a waterfowl sanctuary.

Motion agreed to.

DOMINION-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS

QUEBEC—PROPOSED CREATION OF DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

On the orders of the day:

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Prime Minister whether his attention has been drawn to the fact that a bill has been introduced in the Quebec legislature to set up through legislative action what might be termed a department of external affairs empowered to deal with other countries. I ask the Prime Minister whether any consultation took place in this connection, and whether the government is of the same view as that expressed when the Lesage government was entering into treaties a couple of years ago. What is the government's attitude in this regard, and what does the government intend to do?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have not received a copy of the bill in question, but when I do receive it I will study it with some interest. I do not think a copy of the bill has been received by any member of the government.

We have not been consulted as to its contents, but in view of the reports that have appeared in the press, which may or may not be accurate, based on the terms of the bill, I feel I should say that to the extent that such

[Mr. Béchard.]

a bill purports to set up the administrative machinery which the Quebec government feels it requires for the performance of the functions assigned to its competence, this is a matter for the Quebec government to decide and I have no comment to make.

Inasmuch as the new department being created is reportedly to be entrusted with responsibilities in the external field, such as relations between Quebec and foreign countries and the negotiation of agreements with those governments, I can say this. Our view of the constitutional position in Canada in respect of the federal government's exclusive responsibility for the conduct of the country's external affairs has been put clearly on record in the statement issued on April 23, 1965, by my colleague the Secretary of State for External Affairs, and has been reiterated on other occasions in this house by myself and the Secretary of State for External Affairs. There should be no doubt as to the position in this regard.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Is it not a fact that the Quebec government entered into treaty arrangements? Did not the government of Canada—and as I recall it this was expressed by the right hon. Prime Minister—take the view that under the British North America Act there was no provision for exclusivity in so far as foreign affairs are concerned because at the time the British North America Act became the law of the United Kingdom and the constitution of Canada our foreign affairs were handled in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, the right hon. gentleman has not stated the situation accurately in so far as the actions taken by the previous government of Quebec are concerned. Any agreements made by that government with other countries in respect of cultural and educational matters have been made under a master agreement entered into by the federal government with the countries in question.

Mr. Heward Grafftey (Brome-Missisquoi): Mr. Speaker, I have a further supplementary question. Does this situation not again point up the desirability of setting up a parliamentary study of our constitution as quickly as possible?

Mr. Pearson: No, Mr. Speaker. It underlines the desirability of observing the existing constitution.