

Criminal Code

the commonwealth, to consider methods of further improving world trade. It may be that ministers representing sterling areas will have to discuss certain aspects of the problem with respect to which our Minister of Finance would be more an observer than a participant. But he is there with the same general objective as all the finance ministers—that is to say, to endeavour to promote a larger measure of world trade.

UNITED NATIONS

RECONVENING OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY

On the orders of the day:

Mr. M. J. Coldwell (Rosetown-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs whether or not Canada is supporting the calling of the United Nations assembly, in reply to a circular issued by Madame Pandit, the president of the assembly.

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Secretary of State for External Affairs): I received only this morning the suggestion from the Indian government that the assembly reconvene on February 9. We are giving consideration to the matter at once.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

BUILDING OF DEFENCE ROAD IN MANITOBA

On the orders of the day:

Mr. H. A. Bryson (Humboldt-Melfort): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask a question of the Minister of National Defence. Has he, or any other minister of the government, any statement to make with regard to a report that a defence road is to be built from a point in southern Manitoba to Churchill, Manitoba?

Hon. Brooke Claxton (Minister of National Defence): I have not seen the report but, had I done so, I would say there is nothing in it.

CRIMINAL CODE

JOINT COMMITTEE TO REPORT ON SPECIFIC MATTERS RELATED TO CRIMINAL LAW

The house resumed, from Tuesday, December 15, consideration at the motion of Mr. Garson:

That a joint committee of both houses of parliament be appointed to inquire into and report upon the questions whether the criminal law of Canada relating to (a) capital punishment, (b) corporal punishment or (c) lotteries should be amended in any respect and, if so, in what manner and to what extent:

That 17 members of the House of Commons, to be designated by the house at a later date, be members of the joint committee on the part of this house, and that standing order 65 of the House of Commons be suspended in relation thereto;

[Mr. St. Laurent.]

That the committee have power to appoint, from among its members, such subcommittees as may be deemed advisable or necessary; to call for persons, papers and records; to sit while the house is sitting and to report from time to time;

That the committee have power to print such papers and evidence from day to day as may be ordered by the committee for the use of the committee and of parliament, and that standing order 64 of the House of Commons be suspended in relation thereto;

And that a message be sent to the Senate requesting that house to unite with this house for the above purpose and to select, if the Senate deems advisable, some of its members to act on the proposed joint committee.

Mr. Speaker: Is the house ready for the question?

Mr. Fulton: Is the Minister of Justice not going to make an explanation of the motion?

Hon. Stuart S. Garson (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, when this motion was moved on December 15 it was supported by me in a short speech, following which the debate was adjourned by another member of the house. This being so, I would be glad to close the debate, if no other member wishes to speak.

Mr. Fulton: I understand this is a motion the minister placed before us at the conclusion of the debate on second reading of a bill to amend the Criminal Code. The motion is to set up a special committee of both houses of parliament to consider certain matters. At that time there was no debate. That was on Tuesday, December 15, as I recall it. The motion which the minister placed before us appears in *Hansard* of that day at page 958, and the debate was adjourned. There was no debate actually on that day, because at the close of the minister's remarks I asked this:

Mr. Fulton: Will you move the adjournment of the debate?

And then the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Harkness) said: "There is no debate." And *Hansard* records that "On motion of Mr. Bennett the debate was adjourned." Actually there was no opportunity for debate. The minister did not speak. Therefore, if I may state my understanding of the rule, if the minister speaks now he does not close the debate because, apparently, he did not speak when introducing the motion. Therefore I wonder if it is not possible for him to say something at this stage in order to explain what the government has in mind in connection with setting up this committee. I should think he could speak without actually closing the debate. Then further debate might follow the minister's explanatory remarks.

Mr. Garson: Speaking first to the point of order raised by the hon. member for Kamloops, I would remind the hon. member that