

Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker; I am sure Mr. Sinclair is noting these remarks. Is it still the intention of the government to proceed immediately with the second bill?

Mr. Pearson: Yes, Mr. Speaker, immediately after we can get passage of the bill before us.

RAILWAY STRIKE—UNION REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF LEGISLATION

On the orders of the day:

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): May I ask the right hon. Prime Minister whether he has received from the representatives of the railway unions a letter dated today, a copy of which had been sent to each of the party leaders as well as to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pickersgill) and the Minister of Labour (Mr. Nicholson) asking for a reconsideration of the legislation before the house in order that the members of these unions might comply with whatever action parliament takes? May I ask the Prime Minister whether he has received such a letter and whether he is prepared to make any statement regarding the question contained in it?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the letter in question was left in my office shortly after 2.20 p.m. At that time I was in conference with some of my cabinet colleagues. The letter was delivered to me just before I came into the house, and I understand it was made public before I was able to read it. I will naturally, without delay, give it the consideration which the importance of the subject matter and the positions of those who signed the letter warrants.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Villeneuve): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

The Prime Minister seems to have read those letters, one of which comes from Mr. McLoon, chairman of the strike committee, in New Brunswick, and the other from Messrs. Smith, P. Kelly and T. W. Read.

Does the Prime Minister not feel that both letters mean about the same thing, that is they constitute an anticipated defiance of the act which may be passed by parliament and of public order in this country? It is blackmail of a sort. Could the Prime Minister tell

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us what action he intends to take with respect to that blackmail or that invitation to break the law of the land?

[English]

Mr. Pearson: I do not recall having received such a letter as that to which my hon. friend refers. It was not delivered to me. The first letter referred to by the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam, as I have just indicated, was put into my hands just before I came into the house. I am going to study it immediately.

COMMONWEALTH RELATIONS

ZAMBIA—POSSIBLE FAILURE OF PRESIDENT TO ATTEND CONFERENCE

On the orders of the day:

Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, I have a question that relates to another crisis confronting the Commonwealth and particularly the countries of Africa. Will the Prime Minister tell us whether he has been in communication with the Prime Minister of Great Britain or the President of Zambia, and whether the situation that may be created by the action of the President of Zambia is to be dealt with prior to the meeting of the prime ministers next week?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): I have been in communication with the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom with respect to the forthcoming conference during the last two or three weeks. I have been in communication also with the head of the government of Zambia during that period. As a matter of fact I wrote him the other day urging him to attend the conference, where I think his presence would be most important and valuable. I had hoped that he would be there. I have not heard from him since his decision was announced yesterday not to attend the conference.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

R.C.A.F.—MAINTENANCE OF AIRCRAFT USED TO TRANSPORT PERSONNEL

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Jack McIntosh (Swift Current-Maple Creek): I have a question I wish to direct to the Minister of National Defence, Mr. Speaker. Will a court of inquiry be convened to investigate the circumstances concerning the lack of performance and subsequent emergency repairs prior to and during the