

GREAT LAKES DISARMAMENT

Mr. MEIGHEN moved:

For a copy of the treaty referred to by the Prime Minister in his statement to the press of December 29th last as having been negotiated by his administration between the government of Canada and the government of the United States looking to settlement of the Great Lakes disarmament question.

He said: Well, the Prime Minister stated that nothing had been negotiated there, but there has been no statement yet in regard to No. 36, with regard to control of waters in the Lake of the Woods area.

Motion dropped.

LAKE OF THE WOODS—CONTROL OF WATERS

Right Hon. ARTHUR MEIGHEN (Leader of the Opposition) moved:

For a copy of all papers, letters, writings, correspondence, documents of any kind passing between the government of Canada and the government of the United States relative to the control of the waters in the Lake of the Woods area.

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): There are some papers with respect to control of water in the Lake of the Woods area which there is no objection to bringing down. There are others, however, relating to the same subject which are matters at present under consideration as between the two governments and which it would be unwise to bring down. If my right hon. friend leaves the motion in the form in which it is drafted, to include all papers relative to the control of the waters in the Lake of the Woods area, I would feel it to be in the public interest that these papers should not be brought down until the transactions are finally consummated between the two governments.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Of course every motion that passes is subject to the reservation that any document that is confidential will not be included. But I really understood that negotiations in this regard had been concluded; in fact I think they were concluded before the late government left office. For myself I have never understood the delay in putting into treaty form the consensus adidem that had been arrived at between the two governments. However, if the motion passes I will not expect documents to be brought down that still constitute the subject of negotiation—if, unfortunately, negotiations are still pending; I thought they had been concluded.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Shall the resolution carry?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Let it stand.
Motion stands.

LAKE OF THE WOODS—NATIONAL LEVELS

On motion of Mr. Meighen:

For a copy of the treaty referred to by the Prime Minister in his statement to the press of December 29th last as having been negotiated by his administration between the government of Canada and the government of the United States looking to settlement of the Lake of the Woods National Levels.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Dropped.

Mr. MEIGHEN: If the same words apply that apply to the others.

Motion dropped.

LAKE TRANSPORT CONDITIONS

Hon. J. B. M. BAXTER (St. John City and Counties of St. John and Albert): moved:

For a copy of all correspondence, letters, writings, telegrams and other documents authorizing investigation into conditions or costs of Lake Transport by W. T. R. Preston, and for a copy of Mr. Preston's report.

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): As my hon. friend doubtless knows, the subject matter dealt with in this motion has been referred by the government to a royal commission for investigation. Before that commission had been appointed the government had a special inquiry made to ascertain whether the grounds for investigation by royal commission were as substantial as the government had been given reason to believe they were. Naturally, this preliminary investigation did not involve the hearing of sworn testimony, and I think it would be inadvisable to bring down the report prepared for the government as a guide to its determining whether or not a royal commission should be appointed—not, at least, until after the commission has had a chance of investigating the matters referred to in it. Mr. Preston is secretary of that royal commission. The information contained in his preliminary report will be placed at the disposal of the commission. I do not think it is in the interests of the public that its contents should be disclosed before there is opportunity of having the evidence which he submitted in that form taken under oath before the commission itself.

Mr. BAXTER: A short time ago the Prime Minister rather emphatically endorsed a certain constitutional principle. I think involved in that principle is the idea that the House is entitled to all possible information with regard to the way in which government is carried on, and I think this House is fairly entitled to know whether what Mr. Preston discovered justified the appointment of a