

Mr. GIBSON (Comox-Alberni): The Prime Minister indicated in his announcement that the increase in the veterans pension payments would total \$12,000,000. Does that include the \$7,500,000 he announced on December 19, or is it in addition to that?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I say to my hon. friend it does include it.

LABOUR CONDITIONS

CONVENTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE, GENEVA, 1947

Hon. HUMPHREY MITCHELL (Minister of Labour): In conformity with the provisions of article XIX of the constitution of the international labour organization I desire to table the authentic text of the conventions and recommendations adopted at the thirtieth session of the International Labour Conference at Geneva in June and July last; also copy of P.C. 287 setting out the legislative jurisdiction involved therein.

DIPLOMATIC SERVICE

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN HIS MAJESTY AND THE PRIME MINISTER

Right Hon. L. S. ST. LAURENT (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, on February 12, I indicated to the house that I would examine the press articles referred to by the hon. member for St. Maurice-Laféche (Mr. Hamel) in his question of that day in connection with the new letters patent governing the office of Governor General of Canada. I have now had an opportunity of doing so and also of reading a subsequent article published in *Le Devoir* on February 13. This last article bears the title: "Mr. St. Laurent quite annoyed at the leakage of the state secret."

I hope I did not display any annoyance—which I certainly did not feel—though I was concerned to find that there had been any leakage about confidential correspondence between the Prime Minister of Canada and the secretary of His Majesty the King in his capacity as King of Canada. My concern was not over the contents of the correspondence but over the impropriety of publicity about something which, not only by tradition and by courtesy but also by proper constitutional practice, and even by the implication of the ministerial oaths of office, has always been and should be treated as highly confidential.

Of course it could be no secret that there must have been correspondence in connection

with the new letters patent since it was apparent they were signed by His Majesty himself in London and authenticated under the Great Seal of Canada and countersigned by the Prime Minister of Canada in Ottawa. But the form and tenor of that correspondence was just as confidential as would have been their conversation if the Prime Minister of Canada had approached His Majesty in person at Buckingham Palace or elsewhere and the completion of the letters patent been arranged orally.

Nor was it any secret that though the terms of these letters patent made it legally possible for the governor general, on the advice of Canadian ministers, to exercise any of the powers and authorities of the crown in respect of Canada, without the necessity of submission being made to His Majesty, including among others, royal full powers for the issuance of letters of credence for Canadian ambassadors and foreign ministers, there was no legal necessity to alter existing practices and that it would be the responsibility of the government of Canada, in any prerogative matter affecting Canada, to determine whether the submission should go to His Majesty or to the governor general.

What I have just stated was made perfectly clear to the press by the Prime Minister on October 1, 1947. What gave me some concern is the publication of garbled and speculative accounts of when this correspondence is supposed to have been exchanged and what it is supposed to contain.

Though the publication of the correspondence would at once dispel all this, the government is not disposed to take that easy way of dispelling it, because at best it would be discourteous to His Majesty and because of its possible effect as a precedent on confidential exchanges of views between the sovereign and his responsible advisers in relation to public affairs prior to decisions or actions for which his advisers themselves and they only have full constitutional responsibility.

Le Devoir in its article of February 13 narrows its alleged disclosures to one assertion. After discussing the Prime Minister's communication to the press it says in so many words:

The only new fact asserted by *Le Devoir* is the existence of a personal communication of the king expressing the desire that our ambassadors' letters of credence continue to be submitted to him for signature. It is precisely this royal communication which constitutes the state secret which it was desired to keep inviolate.