

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Winch: You can say "thousands", not "hundreds".

Hon. Leon Balcer (Solicitor General): I wish to thank the hon. member for the interest he has shown in this case all along. I know it is not the practice in this house to disclose the particulars of individual cases, but I think I can go as far as to say that the case is under study at the present time and that a decision will be announced in a day or two.

An hon. Member: Don't go too far.

Mr. Speaker: I think, if I am correct in my recollection, that it is not customary to ask questions of the ministry about the exercise of the prerogative of clemency. I did not object to the question at the time, but I do not think it would be proper to go into detail.

Mr. Harold E. Winch (Vancouver East): It has been customary to ask questions provided the case was not before the courts. Is this matter still before the courts?

Mr. Speaker: I am speaking from memory, but I think it is quite clear that the royal prerogative of clemency is not a subject for questions to the ministry.

[Later:]

Mr. Winch: Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Solicitor General. Can the Solicitor General tell us if any consideration is being given to announcing the commutation of sentences from death to life imprisonment earlier than a few hours or a couple of days before the time the death sentence is to go into effect as pronounced by the judge?

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Vancouver East, I am sure, heard me state earlier that it was not a matter for the house to inquire into the exercise of the royal prerogative of clemency. I refer again to Beauchesne's fourth edition, citation 160, where he makes reference to the Canadian *Commons Journal*, volume 53, and states:

Parliament does not appear to have any part to play in the matter of clemency which is a prerogative of the crown that should not be interfered with by proceedings of the House of Commons while the subject is under consideration by His Excellency and his advisers.

NEWFOUNDLAND—REQUEST FOR STATEMENT ON PRESENT POSITION

On the orders of the day:

Mr. H. W. Herridge (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Prime Minister. I apologize for not sending him notice but it only came to me a few

minutes ago because of some previous remarks made by the Prime Minister.

In view of the Prime Minister's previous statement regarding the value of a cooling off period on the Newfoundland issue, will the Prime Minister tell the house if he now considers the political temperature of this issue sufficiently tepid to warrant further action by his government?

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am not going to engage in a controversy as to relative degrees of heat and the like, but I hope the legislation regarding Newfoundland will be before the house very soon.

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a supplementary question to the Prime Minister. When the Prime Minister spoke about legislation concerning Newfoundland being before the house shortly, was he referring to the legislation concerning our financial relationship or the legislation concerning which disallowance has been asked?

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, it is perfectly obvious, of course, that I was referring to the legislation affecting Newfoundland in reference to the amount of the grant and the like.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

WEST BERLIN—SUGGESTION BY CANADA AS TO UNITED NATIONS ROLE

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Hazen Argue (Assiniboia): I should like to direct a question to the Prime Minister. Is the Prime Minister now in a position to report what consideration has been given to the important proposal put forward by Canada, namely that the United Nations presence could be most helpful in solving the Berlin situation.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): The hon. gentleman asked a similar question on Monday. The wording of his question at that time was as follows:

My question arises out of his statement—

That is, my statement.

—of April 17, as to Canada's position that the United Nations should be asked to play a useful role with regard to the Berlin problem. In view of the reported rejection of the United Kingdom's position, is the Prime Minister able to say whether the very useful and important proposal which he put forward has met with success?

With the indulgence of the house I wish to make a statement in this regard and in answer to the hon. gentleman's question. The newspaper story to which the hon. member referred—and there is a similar one to be found in the *Montreal Gazette* today, dated London, April 21—went further than