

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, May 22, 1970

The House met at 11 a.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

LABOUR, MANPOWER AND IMMIGRATION

First report of Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration—Mr. Weatherhead.

[*Editor's Note: For text of above report, see today's Votes and Proceedings.*]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

STATEMENT BY MINISTER ON REPORT BY EUROPEAN COMMISSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS RESPECTING GREECE

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I have now studied the report of the European Commission of Human Rights on the subject of Greece. I was most impressed by the careful, judicious and impartial way in which the commission carried out its work. Very briefly, the commission found that Greece had broken many of its obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights, particularly those touching personal freedom. It also found that acts of torture and inhuman treatment of prisoners had been carried out and that the Greek government had not effectively suppressed these abuses. On this point, however, the commission found no evidence to suggest that the Greek government ordered or encouraged the use of torture or that it had tried to maintain itself in power by this means.

The commission put forward, and the Council of Europe accepted, ten proposals for the restoration of constitutional and democratic institutions and procedures in Greece. With the permission of the House, I should like to table these proposals. The Greek government does not accept these findings.

Since Canada is not a member of the Council of Europe and is not a party to the interstate dispute that has arisen between Greece

and the Council of Europe, it is not for the Canadian government to intervene in these matters.

However, we have the right, and indeed an obligation, to express our views in support of fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms, about which all Canadians have profound convictions. We are concerned that the European Human Rights Commission has found that there has been a denial of human rights and democratic procedures in Greece. I am conveying these views to the government of Greece. Indeed, I shall be receiving a call from the Greek Ambassador later today, and it is my hope that the government of that country will take them into account in carrying out its declared intention to restore democratic freedoms in Greece.

Members of the House have raised the question of Greece's position in NATO. I am still of the view that Greece should remain in the alliance. Otherwise NATO would be weakened for no useful purpose. We have been in touch with our NATO allies and there seems to be general agreement that Greece should remain in the alliance so that we and other members may maintain our lines of communication with the Greek government. This is the only way I can see for us all to work for the restoration of freedom and democracy in that country, to which the Greek government itself says it is committed.

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the subject matter of the statement of the Secretary of State for External Affairs has been one of great concern to many of us for some time. I note that the minister, following his examination of the findings of the European Commission of Human Rights, intends to express to the Greek government, through its ambassador to Canada, the concern of the Canadian government. Speaking for myself and on behalf of the Official Opposition, I approve of these representations being made to the government of Greece.

• (11:10 a.m.)

I would not suggest that the Canadian government should now attempt to force Greece out of the NATO alliance. I speak as one who believes in NATO and in Canada's continued