

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, April 30, 1969

The house met at 2 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

FINANCE, TRADE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Eighteenth report of Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs—Mr. Gaston Clermont (Gatineau).

[Editor's Note: The text of the foregoing report appears in today's Votes and Proceedings.]

[English]

TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

REFERENCE OF RAILWAY REPORTS TO STANDING COMMITTEE

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, hon. members will recall that the house made an order referring the report of the Canadian National Railways and Air Canada to the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications. As the house will also recall, the 1968 Annual Report of the C.N.R. is now available, and if the house is agreeable I should like to recommend an order whereby the report of the C.N.R. for the year ended December 31, 1968, and the report of the Canadian National Railways Securities Trust for the year ended December 31, 1968, both tabled on April 24, 1969, be referred to the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications. If the house is generally agreeable to that, perhaps that could be made an order of the house.

Mr. Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: It is so ordered.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

STATEMENT BY MINISTER RESPECTING PASS- PORTS—REPAYMENT OF FEES— STAFF OVERTIME

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I promised

the other day that I would make a brief statement on the passport situation. The passport office is going through its peak period—12,500 applications were received last week—and the present volume of applications is expected to continue with only slight easement until mid June.

I realize that this situation has created inconvenience for some members of the travelling public, and the following measures have been taken to cut down the delays:

(a) We are in the process of adding additional accommodation to the passport office which will improve the efficiency of operations and provide room for additional staff. Simultaneously as the program of renovation proceeds, we are adding additional staff;

(b) Nine departmental staff who in the past have had experience in passport work have been drafted on a temporary basis. In addition, during the course of the next two weeks some 27 students who worked in the passport office last summer will be returning to their jobs;

(c) The passport office staff has increased its daily overtime and will work Saturday until the present situation is resolved. The implementation of this policy takes into account individual staff problems, and we hope that Saturday work will not be required beyond the present week.

(d) Three additional telephone lines, for a total of six, have been installed in the special ternoorn, has been on the amendment moved

(e) The staff of examiners has been reorganized in groups of five, each working under a leader. During the course of this week each group leader will be equipped with a telephone. If a form is not properly filled, he will be able to speak to the applicant by telephone to let him know what more information or documentation is required. This should cut down on time consuming exchanges of correspondence;

(f) During the course of a few days I intend to launch an advertising campaign to assist the public to obtain passports without undue delay.

May I add that all applicants could assist the passport office by initiating their applications at an early date, by taking greater care