

Inquiries of the Ministry

conditions. Liability and types of transport are questions that have to be looked into.

My second point concerns oil drilling.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member indicated a moment ago that he had a few points left. I think he should take into account the terms of the Standing Order. As Speaker of the House I have tried to interpret as liberally—if I may use the word—as possible the Standing Order in question, which requires that statements by members representing parties in opposition should be brief. I realize that if the ministerial statement itself is lengthy there is a temptation for opposition spokesmen to make lengthy comments, but certainly an effort should be made by hon. members to limit these comments as much as possible.

Mr. Harding: Mr. Speaker, I had only two or three points to make and I could have got through them in 30 or 40 seconds had Your Honour not risen.

In summarizing these points, I was attempting to point out to the House that I presumed Dr. McTaggart-Cowan and his research assistants would be making recommendations along the lines I have suggested to the government, namely, with regard to oil drilling and safety regulations. I further suggest that oil drilling should be barred completely from areas such as Georgia Strait, if that is the wish of the government and members of this House, and provision should thus be made.

My last point is that research into the conditions that obtain in the extremely cold waters of the Arctic must go ahead promptly. Research must be stepped up in this regard. Until we have such information we will not be in a position to lay down adequate and sensible regulations. I urge the government to proceed without delay.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

CANADIAN SOVEREIGNTY

GEORGES BANK—REPLY TO UNITED STATES
NOTE—GOVERNMENT POLICY

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. Has the government made a formal reply to the diplomatic note from the United States government dated November 5, 1969 in which the United States government disputed the presumption of Canadian ownership over the northeast sec-

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tion of Georges Bank, which is an area off the coast of Nova Scotia. Has the government of Canada replied to that note?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure in what form a reply was made, but I do know that there was an exchange, either verbally or written, between the United States government and the Canadian government on this subject. Both governments have agreed to pursue negotiations as to the establishment of a dividing line delineating the shelf on the United States side and on our side.

Mr. Stanfield: A supplementary question. Would either the Prime Minister or the Secretary of State for External Affairs make a statement to the House at an early date outlining the position of the government of Canada with regard to this dispute? That is to say, what is the attitude of the government of Canada with regard to Canadian sovereignty over these submarine lands? Could the Prime Minister give the House information outlining the precise position that is being taken by the government of Canada?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I do not think it would be necessary to make a statement. The position of the Canadian government is quite clear and we have acted upon it. Our position is that the Geneva convention, to which both countries adhere, provides that the median line applies in cases such as this. In effect, this is the line that the Canadian government has been following. Any permits that have been issued under the authority of Canada have related to the area inside and up to the median line. This is our position and this is the position we took in discussions with the United States.

Mr. Stanfield: I have a further supplementary question. Does the government of the United States dispute this principle or does it dispute that the median line is in fact where the government of Canada believes it to be?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if dispute is not perhaps too strong a word in this case, but the United States certainly disagree with the median line principle as applying in this case. I do not want to state their case for them, but it is that this is a case where special circumstances might apply; that there are special circumstances having to do with the shape of the continental shelf so that some other special rules should apply.