

be deferred until later. Our conversations have so far been confined to the problem that will exist over the next few months until more definite agreements can be worked out. Fortunately it appears that, as a result of the settlements still to be made in respect of past transactions, as well as the continuing expenditures of the Canadian forces overseas, Britain and the sterling area will be receiving sufficient Canadian dollars during the next few months to finance all or nearly all of their requirements in Canada. Consequently we anticipate that the question of providing for a deficit will not arise during this interim period. If there should be a small deficit, it might be covered simply by postponing for a few months payment by the United Kingdom or other sterling area countries for supplies received during this period through Canadian government procurement agencies, or possibly by other purely temporary expedients. These would be simply interim arrangements made in anticipation of a definite agreement which has not yet been considered.

PRISONERS OF WAR

INQUIRY AS TO LIBERATION OF CANADIAN FORCES AT HONG KONG

On the orders of the day:

Mr. JOHN BRACKEN (Leader of the Opposition): I have two or three questions I should like to ask the Prime Minister. One of them has already been very well answered by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Ilsley). It had to do with Mutual Aid. If I may I should like to thank the minister for his very fine statement on that matter. I am sure it will be taken by the public as an assurance that no serious interruption of trade will be permitted.

My first question is: In view of the anxiety of Canadians generally regarding the liberation of the Canadian forces taken prisoner at Hong Kong, would the Prime Minister make a full statement to the house at the earliest opportunity, giving all information in the possession of the government?

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): I may say to the leader of the opposition that the government has made it a practice of giving out just as quickly as it is received any information with respect to those who have been prisoners of war in the far east. At the moment I have not a comprehensive statement that I could give to the house, but as soon as information has been received of a character which will permit of that, I will have the statement made.

Mr. (H.S.V.)

EMPIRE PREFERENCE

PRESS REPORTS OF UNITED STATES DESIRE FOR ABANDONMENT

On the orders of the day:

Mr. JOHN BRACKEN (Leader of the Opposition): Press reports indicate that the government of the United States is seeking to induce the United Kingdom to abandon the empire preference system. Would the Prime Minister advise the house whether any representations to this effect have been received from the government of the United States or from the United Kingdom, and if so, what attitude the Canadian government has taken?

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): No such representations have been received.

FORT McMURRAY OIL

DESTRUCTION OF BUILDINGS AT ABASAND PLANT—INQUIRY AS TO RECONSTRUCTION

On the orders of the day:

Mr. J. R. MacNICOL (Davenport): May I inquire from the Minister of Mines and Resources or from the Minister of Reconstruction, whichever one is directly in control, whether in view of the destruction of the oil separation mill and adjacent buildings of the Abasand plant at Fort McMurray the government proposes to reconstruct the destroyed buildings or to return the property to private interests?

Hon. C. D. HOWE (Minister of Reconstruction): I may say in reply to the hon. member's question that discussions leading to a decision are now taking place between the government and the Abasand company who wish to take over.

HALIFAX V-E DAY RIOTS

MR. JUSTICE KELLOCK'S REPORT—REMISSION OR REDUCTION OF PENITENTIARY SENTENCES

On the orders of the day:

Mr. J. G. DIEFENBAKER (Lake Centre): I should like to ask a question of the Minister of Justice in connection with the report made by Mr. Justice Kellock on the V-E day riots in Halifax. Is it the intention of the government to file that report? Is consideration being given to the remission or reduction of the penitentiary sentences that were passed on the naval personnel as a result of the riots?

Hon. L. S. ST. LAURENT (Minister of Justice): The report of Mr. Justice Kellock was submitted while parliament was not in session, and it was immediately turned over to the king's printer. The copies became