

Mr. Head, Legislative Assistant to the Prime Minister, called on Mr. Alexis Johnson, United States Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs, and a group of senior United States officials. These discussions were very frank and friendly but they revealed, as expected, differences of views between our two governments on a number of questions, and it was agreed that a further round would be held after the United States government had had time to consider the matter further. On March 17, President Nixon telephoned the Prime Minister to express his interest in the matter and offered to send a high level team to Ottawa for further discussions. On March 20 a team of senior United States officials led by Under-Secretary of State Johnson and including the Under-Secretary of the Navy and an Assistant Secretary of Transport, as well as senior officials from the State Department, Defence Department, the Coast Guard, and the Department of the Interior, came to Ottawa and met with me, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Chrétien), the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald), and senior Canadian officials, including the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, and Canada's Ambassador to Washington, to make known the United States views on the questions under discussion. These discussions lasted all day and were again frank but friendly. Subsequently, there were further discussions in Washington between our Ambassador to the United States and Mr. Johnson, and a telephone conversation between the Prime Minister and Secretary of State Rogers. Unfortunately, it did not prove possible for the two governments to reach agreement on all aspects of these questions, as has since been made known by the United States government. I think this account of these discussions makes quite clear that we have taken very seriously the United States interest in these matters.

These differences can be resolved, and resolved in a manner consistent with our interests as a sovereign nation and our long history of close and mutually co-operative relations with the United States. We cannot abdicate our responsibilities in a matter of special importance to us, and we cannot abandon our right and duty to protect our territory. Given this fundamental and irreversible position on our part, there remains nevertheless a wide range of possibilities for bilateral and multilateral co-operation which could advance the cause of environmental preservation in the Arctic waters in harmony with the

Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Bill
interests of all concerned. We are prepared to go forward from this position, but only forward and not back.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): The hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka has a question?

Mr. Aiken: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I should like to ask the minister a question so that we can be perfectly clear about his position on the 12-mile limit, particularly under Bill C-203, although we have been discussing the two bills. Regarding the Arctic Islands, will Bill C-203 draw geographic lines of the 12-mile limit around each island or is it intended to draw a line enclosing all the Arctic Islands? In other words, will the territorial sea as defined in Bill C-203, include areas between Arctic Islands of more than 24 miles?

Mr. Sharp: Since obviously we claim these to be Canadian internal waters we would not draw such lines, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): The hon. member for Greenwood has a question.

Mr. Brewin: Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the minister a question similar to that asked of the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas). One proposal in the United States government note was that Canada should join in organizing an international conference on antipollution measures in the Arctic. Is the Canadian government willing to accept this proposal, at the same time maintaining its clear and unwavering intention to proceed with the legislation and the measures proposed by it unless and until some satisfactory solution is arrived at by international agreement?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, not only did the United States government give notice to us in the note, and the version of it which they published, that they would like to have a conference on Arctic pollution, but we have subsequently received a formal invitation to join with them in sponsoring a conference of this kind dealing with, as we understood it, areas beyond national jurisdiction. We have, of course, in principle, been very happy to consider such a suggestion but I think it is important that before we say we would go to such a conference we have a better understanding of what the discussion would be.

Mr. Aiken: May I ask a further question for clarification, Mr. Speaker? With regard to the