

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

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**Tuesday, December 3, 1968**

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

[*Translation*]

### TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

Second report of standing committee on transport and communications—Mr. Blouin.

[*Note: Text of the foregoing report appears in today's Votes and Proceedings.*]

[*English*]

### DOMINION-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS

#### FEDERAL POSITION RESPECTING OFFSHORE MINERAL RIGHTS

On the orders of the day:

**Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition):** I should like to direct a question to the Prime Minister with regard to his statement yesterday on the important subject of offshore mineral rights, and ask him whether the position of the government of Canada as outlined by the right hon. gentleman yesterday was put forward as a tentative position, a basis for discussion with the provinces, or whether on the other hand it represents a definitive position open to further negotiation in one respect only, that is in relation to the division of that portion of future revenues to be assigned to the provinces.

**Right Hon. P.-E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** I wrote to the premiers of the provinces on Friday indicating that this was the best solution we had been able to devise, taking into account both the interests of all Canadians and the interests of the provinces. Even as to the part which the Leader of the Opposition suggests might be open to negotiation, the percentage of the division with the provinces, we do not think there is much room for negotiation there. We are suggesting a 50-50 deal. We would prefer it to be 60-40, 60 for the federal government and 40 for the provinces, but we doubt whether the provinces would think this was much of a negotiating point.

The negotiation, as we see it, would be mainly among the provinces so they could

come up with some agreement among themselves as to how this 50 per cent would be divided among them.

As to the mineral resource administration lines, they are not final and forever, in the sense that if the provinces were to produce a very good argument for drawing a geodetic line in a slightly different position we would certainly listen to it. However, as I said yesterday we attempted to draw these lines well within territory which we believe to be under federal jurisdiction, so we do not think there will be legal grounds, at any rate, for the provinces wanting, let us say, to draw lines further out to sea. We doubt whether they would want to do that, anyway. Maybe they would want us to draw the lines nearer to the shore. This could always be negotiated.

Apart from that, as to the general scheme I do not say it is not negotiable, in the sense that if the provinces had some much better solution we should not look at it, but the position we have taken was one we reached after very lengthy and mature deliberation. We thought the federal government had to make some offer. This is our offer, and we feel it is a good one.

**Mr. Stanfield:** I gather the answer to my question is that this is a definitive statement of the federal position, subject to certain minor possibilities. I would therefore ask the Prime Minister to explain why the government of Canada has decided to abandon the commitment made by the former prime minister and renewed by himself to negotiate the question of offshore mineral rights.

**Mr. Trudeau:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the Leader of the Opposition was quoting me correctly or Mr. Pearson correctly. I think the words used were to the effect that we would offer some equitable arrangement to the provinces, and we feel this is an equitable arrangement.

**Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask a supplementary question. In his answer a moment ago the Prime Minister said that if the provinces should come up with a much better proposition the government would consider negotiating it or discussing it. Who is to