

Correspondence on Union Trusteeship

in processes which do warrant our characterizing the whole dispute as one which has not only a Canadian but a United States interest as well.

My hon. friend referred to the air traffic agreement and cited this as a precedent. He said that we must produce these documents because on another occasion the governments of the United States and Canada tabled agreements which had been concluded between the two governments with respect to air policy. I am sure my hon. friend does not really expect the house to take that argument seriously. The air agreements were concluded and negotiations in connection with them had terminated, and as a result the agreements between the two governments were made public, as is always done in matters of that sort. But my hon. friend forgot to mention that, when we were discussing agreements involving the security of the state not very long ago in this house, even those agreements had been finalized this house decided that they should not be produced.

Mr. Martineau: May I ask a question. Does the minister consider that the present documents involve the security of the state?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I did not say that. I was just dealing with my hon. friend's argument that every agreement between the two countries was tabled. That was the argument to which I was addressing myself, and I was pointing out the difference between the air agreements and other kinds of agreements, to bolster the suggestion I am now making that the argument made with regard to the air agreement has no application whatever to this situation.

My hon. friend would be the first to admit that while those air agreements were being negotiated any motion for the production of papers in connection with the matters under negotiation would be denied. That is exactly the situation confronting us at the present time. So, Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe that the hon. gentleman, in pursuing this motion, really intends us to take his motion seriously. I am sure that his experience as a member of this house establishes a justification for our belief that he knows that in a matter of such vital importance as this, not yet finalized, and involving the relations of the two countries, they would be concerned about the publication of these matters. This motion should not be accepted. I therefore resist it in view of the precedents in support of the position I have taken.

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I want to make only a comment or two, if I may, with respect to the reply or the arguments of the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Martin). The whole nub of his

argument that these papers should not be produced revolved around what he classified as the public interest. It is oft times difficult to determine, especially when it is the Secretary of State for External Affairs who is speaking, whether he means the public interest or whether he means the government's interest. He expanded upon this question of the public interest to a point where, if I may paraphrase his remarks now, he said that it was never the practice in this House of Commons to give passage to a motion for the production of documents or correspondence with any other country in the world when the subject matter referred to by that correspondence was currently under discussion, because it might be prejudicial to the then current discussions or negotiations. I take it this was the argument.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I do not think I said "never." I said it was not the practice.

Mr. Howard: The minister points out that he said it was not the practice. In essence, then, I am correct in the interpretation I have placed upon what he said, with the exception of the difference between "never" and "not", which might be a grammatical difference if anything.

We dealt yesterday with some motions for the production of papers, and I am sure that if the Secretary of State for External Affairs would just cast his mind back to yesterday he would find that this house agreed, because of the announcement of a minister of the crown, to produce just such documents and correspondence between Canada and the government of another country, documents dealing with a subject matter currently under discussion and negotiation. I refer, of course, to the correspondence between the government of this country and the government of the Soviet union regarding the halibut fishery, which is one of the fisheries covered by the north Pacific fisheries treaty, which treaty is currently under discussion between Canada, United States and Japan.

Surely the argument that it has not been the practice to agree to this sort of motion falls flat when we see that in substance, yesterday, we did agree to just such a motion. It seems to me that unless there is something which the Canadian government wants to hide, which may well be the case, this should be produced. My hon. friend the Secretary of State for External Affairs shakes his head, indicating, I take it, that there is nothing that this government wants to hide. The other side of the coin is, then, that it must be agreeable to disclosing this particular information. If there is nothing to hide, there is no reason why the government, apart from this nebulous question of public