

must be drawn following the trend of the coast line, and so on. Now what is reasonable and what is not, is a question of fact and if the government closed certain bodies of water and somebody thought they were unreasonable it could be taken before the international court, and the outcome of it would be unknown. This is unpredictable.

Mr. HOWARD: Exactly. This is my understanding of the situation; that you look at each situation and say, "How does this fit within the general concept of the outline or contours of the coast?" But there is no clear spelling out of the details saying they must be so wide, or anything of this sort.

Mr. ROBICHAUD: Yes, there is because the distance that has been normally accepted by the International Court is about 47 miles?

Mr. OZERE: No. No. There is a special article for base which closes base at 24 miles but, in the case of straight base lines, I think this is what the Minister had reference to. For example, one of the lines drawn in Norway was about 43 miles in length.

Mr. HOWARD: My concern first, though not exclusively, but at the moment, is with the west coast. There are, with respect to those straight base lines, one or two places they could go. They could close off Queen Charlotte Sound and stretch from the northern top of Vancouver Island to the southern tip of Queen Charlotte, and presumably this is what the United States is contending against. I am just guessing now that they are arguing the area where those base lines should go.

Presumably again, if we come to some agreement with the United States on where those base lines should go, which will be a withdrawal from the initial position the government took in the Committee two years ago, then presumably, if there is an agreement, we have no fear of the United States taking us before the International Court of Justice. I think I, or anybody could come to this conclusion. But if there cannot be agreement, if the United States position is too firm, then, so far as we are concerned, and knowing the United States, I know they would want to drive our base lines as close into shore as they possibly could and to have as small a belt of water as possible as Canadian territory.

If there cannot be an agreement on that basis then, presumably, the Minister's position would still be, as stated before the Committee a couple of years ago, that the straight base lines would be, for the sake of argument, enclosing the southern portion of Queen Charlotte Sound. If that were the case, we might be taken to the International Court of Justice by the United States if they do not get their way in negotiating with us. In effect, in forcing us to accept their determination of what will be the straight base line, not ours.

Mr. ROBICHAUD: It is a possibility.

Mr. HOWARD: Yes, all I am doing is posing these possibilities. I am not asking you to deny or confirm the assumptions to which I am coming, because this would put you in the position of having to say you make no comment about it because it would be disclosing a certain position. But I think it is fairly obvious to me that this is the position we are in.

The CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen, I want to draw to your attention that the time has come for us to rise because the House will be sitting very shortly.