

Inquiries of the Ministry

but in his absence I should like to address it to the Minister of Public Works, who is probably better informed on the matter. Could the minister inform the house whether there is disagreement in substance between the federal government and the government of British Columbia with respect to the terms of the draft treaty between Canada and the United States regarding the Columbia river development?

Hon. E. D. Fulton (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult to know at this stage precisely what is the position of the government of British Columbia. Our problem throughout has been the repeated, almost dizzying frequency with which they have changed their position.

All I can say is that at the time the treaty was signed there was no disagreement that was apparent; that every step had been taken to ensure unanimity including the writing of a letter formally to Mr. Williston enclosing the text of the treaty, advising him that the treaty was to be signed and that it would be signed in Washington, and giving him the date, and stating that this would be done, on the assumption that, unless we heard to the contrary from them, it had their approval. That letter was acknowledged by Mr. Williston and no suggestion of objection was raised. So it was presumed, and I think it was a justifiable presumption that it was signed with the knowledge and approval of the government of British Columbia.

Some conflicting statements have been made since by government members out there about the treaty, but generally speaking I think it is correct to say that they are still in accord with the terms of the treaty as drawn up and signed by the two governments.

The main difficulty has arisen with respect to the policy to be followed as to the disposition of the benefits of the treaty. Real efforts have been made to come together on that point. So far this has not been possible, but discussions are continuing.

[*Later:*]

Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Bonavista-Twillin-gate): Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether I might put to the Minister of Public Works a question supplementary to the one asked by my hon. friend from Kootenay East. I would ask the minister whether there has been any change in the policy of the federal government with respect to the benefits which would accrue under the Columbia treaty.

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Speaker, the benefits are determined by the treaty itself, which was agreed between Canada, British Columbia and the United States. At the time of the signing

[Mr. Byrne.]

of the treaty it was our understanding, based on the discussions which had taken place in the policy liaison committee, made up as it was of ministers of the federal government and ministers of the government of British Columbia, that there was also mutual agreement or mutual policy as to the disposition of those benefits.

It will be, I think, apparent from the course of the discussions and statements that have been made about this policy question since then, that, as we see it, the provincial government changed its policy with regard to the disposition of the benefits. We have maintained in general the policy which we had and which we felt to be the correct one. Sincere efforts have been made, however, to see whether it is possible to find a meeting ground between the two positions which had thus come into conflict, in order that this great project might be commenced at the earliest possible date. It has been difficult, but those discussions are still going on.

[*Later:*]

Mr. J. A. Byrne (Kootenay East): I wish to direct a question to the Prime Minister. Since January 17 will be the second anniversary of the signing of the draft Columbia treaty, and since there appears to be no substantive difference between the federal and provincial governments regarding this treaty, will the government place this agreement before a committee of the house forthwith?

SPORTS

GREY CUP GAME—REQUEST FOR FORECAST OF RESULT

On the orders of the day:

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question deals with a national celebration which is to take place not in five years but tomorrow. May I ask the Prime Minister, as one who is participating in this event and as a member from a prairie province, if he would care to take the house into his confidence as to who is going to win the Grey cup?

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker I do not think that is quite a fair question. After all, I have to be neutral.

COMBINES

DRUGS—INQUIRY AS TO REPORT

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might direct a question to the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Justice or the acting minister and inquire whether there is any knowledge available