

Columbia River Treaty

the circumstances connected with the conclusion of the treaty. The main debate on the treaty should take place on this motion for the second reading of the bill. As to the other stages of the measure, procedure follows its ordinary course.

I recognize that we do not have a bill before us; we have only a resolution.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Oh.

Mr. Knowles: The secretary of state says "Oh". Why does he not stand up and say what he has to say so as to get it on the record a little better?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): This is an absurd argument.

Mr. Knowles: Despite the discomfort which the Secretary of State for External Affairs is suffering, may I point out that in this paragraph which refers to the bringing before parliament of a treaty there is a reference to ways in which parliament may express its opinion and, further, the suggestion is made in this paragraph of Beauchesne that when a treaty is brought before parliament in the form of a bill members have the right to move amendments on second reading so as to express opinions on the action connected with the adoption of that treaty.

Surely, this same right should apply if this is being done in the present foreshortened way? What we have before us now is not a bill. If the Secretary of State for External Affairs will possess his soul in patience he will see I am not pressing that we should have a bill. But I am saying that the rights which we would have if the government had brought in a bill, the right to put forward amendments expressing an opinion, should surely not be taken from us as a result of this device of bringing in a simple resolution.

Mr. Herridge: That is why this was done.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): You are hurting the argument of the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin).

Mr. Knowles: Does the hon. member for Greenwood feel that way? No, he does not.

Surely, if there is any point at all in bringing this measure before parliament, parliament should be able to express its opinion. I do not know exactly what would happen if we were to turn down the resolution in the light of the statement made by the hon. member for St. Lawrence-St. George (Mr. Turner). He says the executive has full power. Well, the resolution reads:

That it is expedient that the houses of parliament do approve the ratification of the treaty—

And so on. Suppose we do not. If the executive has this power it could, surely, go ahead and ratify this treaty anyway. So the whole course, according to the author quoted by the hon. member for St. Lawrence-St. George, is being carried out for the convenience of political strategy—unless, of course, we are to be allowed to express our opinions.

It seems, therefore, that Your Honour should look at this point of order in the light of what is assumed to be the purpose of bringing this measure before parliament, namely to give an opportunity for parliament to express its opinion. The opinion which parliament expresses might be yes, or it might be no, or it might be "yes, subject to the government doing certain things". I submit that this is a legitimate opinion for parliament to express and that it has the right to do so, a right which should not be eliminated simply because the hon. member for St. Lawrence-St. George says the government will waive its rights, but waive them only so far.

Mr. Turner: Perhaps if I might reply briefly—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. member has already spoken and I am afraid he cannot speak again at this point.

Mr. Knowles: Perhaps he could ask me a question before I sit down.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes; perhaps he could put his contribution in the form of a question to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

Mr. Turner: Thank you. I should like to ask the hon. member whether he does not think importance attaches to the first paragraph of the citation from Beauchesne to which he referred—the paragraph which begins:

When it is required, either by statute or by the terms of a trade agreement, that the agreement be approved by parliament—

This is what leads to the necessity for a bill—where the measure falls within those terms because the bill involves a statutory duty on the part of the government, or a fiscal change arising from an imbalance of ways and means. I ask the hon. member whether his argument is not altered accordingly? When a bill is presented which involves an imbalance of ways and means it would be subject to all the openings for amendment which are possible with regard