

some times profits are lower while at other times they are higher.

Mr. Douglas: Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that practically all the large chain stores have shown very substantial increases in their net profits, will the Acting Prime Minister undertake on behalf of the government to have the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs look into this matter to determine whether there is an absence of competition or collusion between food stores in this country?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, the answer to that question is yes. That is what I said in my first reply.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

CONSULTATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES ON SETTING OF DATE FOR LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE

Mr. Lloyd R. Crouse (South Shore): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct my question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. In view of the high hopes of many fishermen in Atlantic Canada concerning a conservation program to be established at the next Law of the Sea Conference, will the minister indicate whether he has had recent consultations with the other countries involved and whether a date has yet been set for this important conference?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, we have been holding consultations about the Law of the Sea Conference. We are still very interested in having it proceed as was originally envisaged, and that is the purpose of our interventions. Whether we shall succeed, of course, is not entirely within our control.

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PUBLIC SERVICE

CAPE BRETON—REPLACEMENT OF ELIGIBILITY LIST FOR UNILINGUAL POSITIONS BY ONE FOR BILINGUAL POSITIONS

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, my question relates to one I directed a few days ago to the President of the Treasury Board regarding a Public Service competition held in the Cape Breton area to fill positions that may occur in the next year in Sydney and North Sydney. As we all know, these eligibility lists are good for a period of one year. I have information to the effect that those who qualified in this competition, numbering in all 20-odd, have now or will be advised that as of June 15 their chances will be gone and the positions will be filled by those who qualified in a previous competition requiring bilingualism. I should like to repeat my question of the other day. Will the minister enlighten us on this subject and advise us what we can tell these men who have already qualified but who are not going to get the opportunity of filling these positions in the Public Service?

Inquiries of the Ministry

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I did cause an inquiry to be made. As the hon. gentleman knows, the establishment of this list and the competition is the responsibility of the Public Service Commission, not that of the government, as administrator. The Public Service Commission assured me it would investigate this story from Halifax and make a report. I have not yet received it.

Mr. Muir: Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact the problem is not in Halifax but in Cape Breton, particularly in Sydney and Sydney Mines, will the minister assure us that these 20-odd people will not be discriminated against by not receiving employment because of the fact they are unable to speak two languages?

Mr. Drury: I can give assurance that there will be no discrimination, but I would rather wait until such time as the Public Service Commission reports before making any kind of statement.

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[Translation]

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

CONSTITUTIONALITY OF SASKATCHEWAN BILL RESPECTING OWNERSHIP OF FARM LAND

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the hon. Minister of Justice.

[English]

I should like to ask the minister to advise the House whether the Saskatchewan bill prohibiting the ownership of farm land by other Canadians and foreigners has been brought to his attention and, if so, has he received advice about its constitutionality?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, the bill has indeed been brought to my attention and I have sought comment on its constitutional validity. Although it is only in the bill stage, it does seem to me that if it is not unconstitutional it ought to be.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, I was surprised to hear the minister say he is looking into the constitutionality of a bill that has not yet been passed. It has been put over until the next session, as I understand it. It is a bill against ownership of farm lands in Saskatchewan by "foreigners" which includes all the rest of the people in Canada who do not live in Saskatchewan. In view of the fact the government of Saskatchewan is asking for representations to be made concerning this bill, will the minister, as the custodian of the judicial conscience of Canada, bring to the attention of the government of Saskatchewan the fact that this type of legislation is most disruptive and entirely out of keeping with our concept of Canadianism?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!