

Supply—Northern Affairs

Canada. This welching on our word to the United States, and this whole deplorable mess, is one of the worst bungles in the whole history of our relations with the United States and of the relations of the federal government with the provinces.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): It is necessary to correct these wild statements of the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate. This was not a matter of some civil servants meeting together. The government of British Columbia was represented in these negotiations by two ministers, two very eminent ministers, Mr. Williston and Mr. Bonner. They participated throughout. There was no bungling and the good name of Canada has not been dishonoured in any respect. An agreement was entered into in the form of this treaty. There has been no dishonouring of an obligation at all. The good name of Canada continues to be good. The honour of Canada is unimpaired, Mr. Chairman.

Now, it is regrettable that there has been delay. This delay is due, I assure you, to no fault on the part of the federal government.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Whose fault is it?

Mr. Pickersgill: You should have nailed them down in the first place.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): The hon. member talks about nailing people down. It is all very well to talk about nailing people down, but that is not the way in which you proceed in negotiations with sovereign governments if you wish to achieve agreement.

We believe that the agreement that was negotiated is of advantage and benefit to Canada. Even if it may seem difficult and take a great deal of effort, we are going to persevere in our efforts to bring about a project we believe to be of very great advantage to Canada and to the people of British Columbia.

Mr. Chevrier: May I ask the minister one or two more questions in this regard? When the treaty was signed between the federal authorities and the United States authorities in Washington, did any of the British Columbia representatives go along with the Canadian delegation?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): I understand that none was present at the signing, although I believe they had been invited. The hon. member is aware, from previous reports that have been made to the house and correspondence that was tabled, that the letter from Premier Bennett which indicated for the first time a measure of dissent from the firm understanding which had prevailed, arrived in Ottawa while the Prime Minister,

to the knowledge of the government of British Columbia, was actually en route to Washington to sign the treaty with President Eisenhower.

Mr. Chevrier: There are one or two other matters that arise out of this. The minister has said that the good name of Canada has not been affected. I will not enter into contentious debate because I admire the manner in which the minister is attempting to get his estimates through at the moment. He is not always in this non-contentious mood. I commend him for it because I think there is great progress to be obtained under those circumstances.

The point is related to the statement of the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate and the minister's reply. The minister will, of course, remember what the secretary of the interior, Mr. Udall, said when he complained rather bitterly, and publicly, about the delay of the government of Canada in fulfilling its responsibilities and obligations in connection with the treaty. This, as the minister knows, brought a retort from the Minister of Justice who, in effect, told this United States cabinet minister to mind his own business. I bring this up because, certainly, it is not tantamount to giving Canada a good name outside of our own country. If, in fact, a treaty was signed many, many months ago, and has not been submitted to parliament, either because there was no agreement between the province and the federal government or for other reasons which we shall not discuss at the moment, does the minister not think it would have been far better to have had an agreement in writing, signed and ratified by parliament, with the province prior to the signing of the treaty in Washington?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): It is pleasant, Mr. Chairman, to speculate on how things might be done if one had the opportunity of creating events in the pleasantest and most suitable way. However, the fact is that there had been, as I pointed out, a complete measure of understanding between the government of British Columbia and the government of Canada right up until the day before the treaty was signed. It was in the light of that knowledge that the plans were made for the signing of the treaty, and the terms of the treaty. As I have said, the negotiations were completely known to the ministerial representatives of the province and they had been parties to all the decisions which were involved that led up to this final act.

Now, the hon. member refers to secretary Udall. I think it only fair to say that Mr. Udall felt he had been somewhat misrepresented in the press because he had not attempted,