

Inquiries of the Ministry

Has the government set up an inquiry about the recent fires in Montreal harbour and, if so, is the government or the Prime Minister in a position to tell us what progress has been made, if such an inquiry has taken place?

[English]

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am not in a position to deal with that question, but I will make inquiries of the Minister of Transport immediately.

BANK ACT**INQUIRY AS TO INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Eric A. Winkler (Grey-Bruce): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance. I should like to ask the minister when the house can expect the resolution in regard to revision of the Bank Act.

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am hopeful that this will be on the order paper fairly soon. The cabinet is just completing its consideration of the issues raised.

COMMONWEALTH RELATIONS**INQUIRY AS TO CONFERENCE OF PRIME MINISTERS THIS SUMMER**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. W. B. Nesbitt (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister tell the members of the house whether any conference of commonwealth prime ministers is presently planned for June or July of this year?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the communique issued at the last commonwealth prime ministers' meeting at Lagos in January stated that if the Rhodesian situation was not cleared up by June or July there would be another meeting of the prime ministers of the commonwealth in July of this year.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**REQUEST FOR COPIES OF BILL GIVEN FIRST READING**

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Alvin Hamilton (Ou'Appelle): Mr. Speaker, last night the Minister of Transport promised the house that he would be making

[Mr. Caouette.]

available to hon. members copies of Bill C-178, dealing with the reorganization of the government. The house passed the resolution last night but hon. members cannot get copies of the bill. My question to the Prime Minister is, when will these copies be available?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am informed the bill was available in the house last night.

Hon. Michael Starr (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege which is based on the answer given by the Prime Minister a moment ago to the effect that copies of the bill relating to the reorganization of government departments were available last night. I have just checked; no bills were available, and none are yet available, because they are at the printer's.

Mr. McIlraith: I had one here last night.

Mr. Churchill: Then why didn't we?

Mr. Starr: Again on my question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, the minister seems to have had a bill which is not yet printed, but he has it in some form or other. No one else has a copy of the bill which he says was available. Available to whom?

Mr. McIlraith: It was available in the house at the table.

Mr. Starr: It was not. Again I raise a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker. I have checked with the table and it appears the bill was not available at the table.

Mr. McIlraith: I should just correct the hon. gentleman on the procedure. I do not know the numbers that were available; it may well be that insufficient copies were supplied. When a resolution is passed the usual procedure—though it was deviated from four or five years ago on two or three occasions—is to have limited first printing. I think the number is 25, but I will verify that and find out the exact number. Then when the bill is given first reading, a pro forma reading, the required number for total distribution is made available, and those copies are usually available the next morning.

If this bill on government reorganization necessary steps to find out why it was not distributed I would be very glad to take the necessary steps to find out why it was not distributed in the usual way to all hon. members, but the bill was available last night at the conclusion of the resolution stage.