

TRADE

PARIS CONFERENCE—INSTRUCTIONS
TO MINISTERS

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Lionel Chevrier (Laurier): Mr. Speaker, may I address a question to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister tell the house what instructions or advice, if any, were given to the two ministers who attended the meeting in Paris with the members of the 13 countries forming the two regional trading blocs?

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, both hon. gentlemen will be in the house on Monday. On that occasion they will give a report of what took place in Paris, the nature of the views they expressed there and the decisions that were made at that conference.

TRANSPORTATION

ROYAL COMMISSION—REQUEST FOR STATEMENT
ON PROGRESS

On the orders of the day:

Mr. J. F. Browne (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister give the house any information concerning the present position of the royal commission on transportation, and when we may expect a report from the commission?

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I looked into this matter today because I expected that it would be one of the questions that would be asked. I communicated with the chairman of the royal commission and, with the leave of the house, I will place before the house the information he gave me.

As hon. members know, some months ago the then chairman of the commission, Hon. Charles McTague, retired as the result of a serious illness and Mr. M. A. MacPherson was appointed in his place. I have this report from the present chairman.

A schedule of meetings has been arranged for western Canada commencing in Winnipeg on February 8. On Monday next the commission will commence to hear submissions in Ottawa in connection with grain rates, and it is expected that the cross-examination in that regard will conclude by the 28th of this month. Then, following that western trip meetings will be held in Toronto on March 14 to 16 and on March 23 public hearings will resume in Ottawa.

Having regard to the issues that are being discussed before the commission it is not expected that the cross-examination by the several counsel engaged upon the commission

Inquiries of the Ministry

will be particularly short. Following the completion of the hearings to which I have referred there will, of course, have to be consideration given to the report and to those matters to be included in the report. I might add in that connection that the commission felt it might be a good idea, in response to the requests from the various provinces, that meetings be held in the capital cities of each of the provinces, and that procedure was going to be followed, except in British Columbia, where the request was for a short hearing in Victoria and the main hearing in Vancouver, and in Quebec, where the wish was expressed that evidence be taken in both Montreal and Quebec city.

That is the agenda; there is the future course to be followed by the commission in connection with the hearing of evidence. Hon. gentlemen will be able to deduce therefrom that there is no early possibility of a report being handed down.

Mr. Hubert Badanai (Fort William): Following the Prime Minister's statement regarding the sittings of the royal commission on freight rates, I should like to ask if he received a request from the lakehead to hold sittings there?

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, there were requests from various cities, including Fort William, for hearings, but the attitude taken by the commission was that, consistent with its announced policy, the commission would not decide to go to any other cities than those to which I have already alluded.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS MADE ON ORDERS
OF THE DAY

On the orders of the day:

Mr. G. J. McIlraith (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might raise a point of order at this stage of the proceedings and ask for your direction on it, either now or later if you wish to let the matter stand for further consideration. We have had two quite lengthy statements made in answer to questions on very important matters, one by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Green) and the other by the Prime Minister (Mr. Diefenbaker). It seems to me that these were in the nature of statements rather than proper answers to questions, and as such they should have been made under the item of motions in the routine proceedings.

It will be recalled that during the first answer a motion was made and a document tabled. Surely this document should have been tabled under the item of motions, and the statement made at that time. The same