

Inquiries of the Ministry

REPORTED OFFER OF SPEAKERSHIP TO HON.
MEMBER FOR WINNIPEG NORTH CENTRE

for assuaging the feelings of the Port Arthur city council regarding the minister's initial decision to send only minor departmental officials to confer with the council about deep sea shipping facilities at the lakehead?

Hon. George H. Hees (Minister of Transport): In the first place I feel sure that the feelings of the Port Arthur city council do not need any assuaging, because when I went to the lakehead some few weeks ago I was received very cordially by the officials of both Port Arthur and Fort William. Since that time I have discussed this matter with my colleague the Minister of Public Works. As a result of these discussions, officials, not minor officials but senior officials, of both departments will go to the lakehead next Monday to examine the harbour facilities to ascertain if they are adequate, in their opinion, to handle such extra traffic as could reasonably be expected to arise when the St. Lawrence seaway is completed.

A survey will be carried out from an engineering point of view. Following that survey, a thorough study from the economic point of view will be carried out by the economics section of my department in order to ascertain just what additional traffic might be expected to pass through to the lakehead as a result of the completion of the St. Lawrence seaway.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

INQUIRY AS TO SETTING UP OF VETERANS
AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

On the orders of the day:

Mr. H. W. Herridge (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a kindly inquiry of my former colleague on the parliamentary committee on veterans affairs. Both our hearts beat as one on this question. In view of the fact that for 12 years the minister did urge the former government to establish a standing committee on veterans affairs, could the minister tell the house when the government of the day proposes to move for the establishment of such committee?

Hon. A. J. Brooks (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my colleague the hon. member for Kootenay West for his very kindly remarks. We have been interested, of course, for years in setting up a standing committee on veterans affairs, and I can assure him and the house that the matter is receiving consideration. If such a committee is in the best interests of veterans legislation it will be done.

Mr. Gauthier (Portneuf): If, if,

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Irvin Studer (Swift Current-Maple Creek): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address a question to the Prime Minister. Is it true that the Prime Minister has requested the socialist member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) to be the permanent Speaker of this House of Commons? If there has been any correspondence on the subject I would ask that copies of it be tabled.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I answer that first categorically. No; there was no offer to the hon. gentleman to be permanent Speaker. I am one of those who believe that action should be taken, having regard to what took place in the last two or three sessions, to bring about a degree of authority in the Speaker that would be above partisan consideration. During the election campaign and prior thereto I pointed out that one of the matters that deserved consideration was the appointment of a permanent Speaker and, if possible, when that unanimity of opinion could be secured in the House of Commons, to bring about permanence in the speakership. However, that has not been achieved, in order to place the speakership above the importunities of anyone in this house, and in order that the Speaker would never in the future, during this parliament, be in any way considered to be, or placed in, the unenviable position in which those who now sit opposite to us placed the former Speaker.

The hon. gentleman mentioned the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. There was no offer of a permanent speakership in any way inherent in the offer. What I said was this, and I will table the correspondence if my hon. friend is willing and if he expresses his willingness now. I asked the hon. member whether, because of the fact that he was regarded as an authority on parliamentary rules, he would allow me to place his name in nomination; and if he were chosen by the House of Commons, would he accept the appointment. That is the total and summary answer to my hon. friend.

[Later:]

Mr. Speaker, I do want to make clear one thing that may not have been clear in my earlier remarks. I am very anxious to table these two letters. It has been agreed by my hon. friend from Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) that they should be tabled, and with your permission it can be done at once.