

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, December 1, 1960

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

NATO—SUGGESTED POOL OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

On the orders of the day:

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Prime Minister whether he can give any report or make any comment on the proposal that has been made by the supreme commander of NATO for the establishment of a pool of nuclear arms under NATO control.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, naturally I have read and heard of the representations made by General Norstad, and I can only say this. I believe there is a possibility of a meeting of NATO heads of government within the next few months, possibly next spring, to review the future of the North Atlantic alliance and, of course, to discuss all those matters which are of peculiar moment to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

There will, of course, be a meeting of foreign ministers and other ministers in Paris in just over two weeks' time. No doubt discussions will then take place regarding any matters that are considered to be of significance in connection with this important organization.

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS

MONCTON, N.B.—REHIRING OF MEN GIVEN LAY-OFF NOTICES

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Hazen Argue (Assiniboia): I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Transport. In view of a telegram sent yesterday and signed by L. K. Abbott, general chairman of the Canadian brotherhood of railway transport and general workers, stating that local railway officers in Moncton have indicated that 124 employees who were given lay-off notices would not be rehired unless traffic increases, although the presidents of both railways and other officers have publicly stated that lay-off notices had a bearing on the strike action, would the minister assure the house that all the 124 employees will be rehired and maintained in their positions on the continuation of railway operations?

Mr. Speaker: I take it that the hon. member is expressly relating his question to the bill which is presently before the house providing for a continuation of railway operations. If I am correct in that, I would suggest that this is previous, because the house has not yet disposed of the bill.

Mr. Argue: I am quite willing to wait until the bill is discussed in committee, but I ask this question now because I raised similar questions about these employees yesterday and the day before—though, it is true, the terminology was somewhat different—and a reply was promised by the minister. I hoped the minister would be able to give the house a reply at this time.

Hon. Leon Balcer (Minister of Transport): I have now heard from the Canadian National Railways in reply to my inquiry concerning the question asked yesterday by the hon. member. As far as the question he has just asked is concerned, I received notice of it only as I was walking to the house, but I will take it up with the management.

In the question he asked the day before yesterday, and to which we referred yesterday, the hon. member for Assiniboia mentioned a telegram wherein a charge was made that there have been unnecessary and spiteful lay-offs by the Canadian National Railways of non-operating employees. At that time I repeated an answer I had given to a previous question, namely that the management had advised me that work force reductions which had been made were part of the adjustments which must accompany variations in traffic volume.

The management of Canadian National Railways has now categorically denied the allegations made, and assert that they are without foundation. Furthermore, in anticipation of the legislation now being considered by the house, and of the traffic volume of the railway being restored, the Canadian National has already taken steps toward the reinstatement of employees.

POWER

COLUMBIA RIVER—REPRESENTATIONS ON PREJUDICIAL RESULTS OF TREATY

On the orders of the day:

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): Yesterday the hon. member for Kootenay West asked me this question:

—Has the Prime Minister received telegrams and other communications from the city of Revelstoke,