

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 24, 1966

The house met at 3 p.m.

PARLIAMENTARY RESTAURANT

MOTION FOR APPOINTMENT OF JOINT COMMITTEE

On the order: Government notices of motion:

February 22—The Minister of Public Works—The following proposed motion—That a joint committee of the Senate and House of Commons be appointed respecting the parliamentary restaurant:

That twenty five members of the House of Commons, to be designated at a later date, act on behalf of this house as members of the said committee and report from time to time, and that standing order 67 (1) be suspended in relation thereto; and

That a message be sent to the Senate acquainting their Honours thereof.

Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to section 2 of standing order 21 this government notice of motion stands transferred to and ordered for consideration under government orders at the next sitting of the house.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

GHANA—REPORTED OVERTHROW OF GOVERNMENT BY MILITARY FORCES

On the orders of the day:

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I regret that I was unable to communicate with the Prime Minister in this regard; I had no information on the matter until we arrived back here a few minutes ago. Has the Prime Minister anything to say regarding the coup in Ghana involving the overthrow of the Nkrumah administration; and what is the position in that country of the 100 or so Canadians who usually live there?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, as my right hon. friend knows I have had only a few moments to look at the overnight telegrams, but I did examine this particular one. While it is not definitive, in that there may have been developments since this message was sent, it did indicate that there was a military coup early in the morning; that there was some firing which went on for a comparatively short time, then Accra became calm.

What will be the further course of the move against the government, of course, I do not know at the present time. It seems to have been a military revolt against the existing government. The disturbances have been short and were reduced to a minimum, according to the message I received.

With regard to the position of the Canadians in Accra, we are told that at the present time there is no cause for anxiety. There are a good many Canadians there, but the information I have at the moment indicates that they were not in any danger of any kind. I will be glad to keep the house and my right hon. friend informed of events as they occur.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I know the Prime Minister did not have time to look into this matter, Mr. Speaker, but at the same time I should like to ask a question which I think is uppermost in the minds of many Canadians, and it is this. What is the basis upon which recognition is granted of an insurgent group that takes over government in this way? What length of time is usually allowed to elapse before a government ceases to exist diplomatically, and recognition is given to an incoming government? Is this insurrection and the ousting of the Nkrumah government of such a nature that early recognition may be expected?

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, it is not easy or wise to be dogmatic in regard to the conditions which warrant recognition after a government has been overthrown. It depends, of course, on circumstances. Sometimes the new government is given recognition very quickly, as in the case of Nigeria a few weeks ago. At other times we have waited. A most important consideration is whether the new regime seems to be in control of the country, a control which is at least tacitly admitted by the country's people in so far as this can be ascertained.

Another consideration is that we should get in touch at once with our friends, and especially with our friends in the commonwealth, to see if they have information that we have not got. Very often we act in concert in these matters.

I do not think I can add anything more at the present time, Mr. Speaker. There have