

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

MEASURE TO APPROVE AGREEMENT ON STATUS OF ORGANIZATION, NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES AND INTERNATIONAL STAFF

Hon. Alphonse Fournier (for the Secretary of State for External Affairs) moved the second reading of Bill No. 15, to provide for privileges and immunities in respect of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): Would the parliamentary assistant make a statement?

Mr. Jean Lesage (Parliamentary Assistant to the Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, on November 8, while at the resolution stage, I made a complete statement. I do not believe I could add anything at this time. It is my understanding that the bill will be referred to the committee on external affairs, so there may be detailed study of all sections.

Mr. J. M. Macdonnell (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make only one or two comments. Unfortunately I was not here on November 8 and did not hear the statement made at that time. I have looked at the debate which took place on a somewhat similar motion in 1947. Incidentally, due to the industry of the hon. member for Lake Centre (Mr. Diefenbaker), there appears on record a point of historical interest which I should like to place on record. He pointed out that—

—the first general law on immunity, as far as Great Britain is concerned, goes back to the reign of Queen Anne. The Russian Ambassador in England having been arrested, strong objection was taken by the Russian government, which resulted in the passing of the diplomatic privileges act of 1708, providing for diplomatic immunities, which has been continued since this time.

I do not imagine there is any question to be raised by any of us in this connection, other than the question as to whether, as time goes on, the number of people covered by these immunities grows and grows. There are one or two points I should like to raise for the attention of the parliamentary assistant. We have a bill containing only two sections and an agreement of some length signed on behalf of Canada, which we are asked to approve. We know of course that in a sense, due to the non-coöperation of Russia, part of the agreement made in 1947 has become nugatory, so far as certain aspects were concerned. Part II of the agreement says, among other things:

The organization may hold currency of any kind and operate accounts in any currency.

Then if we read further we find that not only representatives, that is to say senior

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representatives, but “any representative of a member state”—and I take it that “any” means “any”—shall enjoy the following privileges and immunities, as set out in the following paragraph (f):

(f) the same facilities in respect of currency or exchange restrictions as are accorded to diplomatic personnel of comparable rank.

I mention this only because I think we have known of cases where military and other personnel, who were on their lawful missions in other countries, have indulged in currency operations which were not exactly what was intended by the scope of the agreements.

Without taking more time, because I understand this will be further considered, I would suggest that the agreement be looked at closely; because I suppose as time goes on we may have scores—and, for all I know, even more than that—of people in this country enjoying extraordinary immunities. I suppose it is extremely difficult for any country to be sure of all the attitudes, views and practices of all the people who are going to work for it. One of the points that strikes me is that it is contemplated that the home country, so to speak, may provide a certain number of staff for the organization of a visiting country. In their cases, of course, immunities are less.

I am suggesting only this, that the whole atmosphere of bringing here a considerable number of people—if there are to be a considerable number—is such that very close scrutiny and a very considerable amount of vigilance ought to be exercised.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to the standing committee on external affairs.

PUBLIC PRINTING AND STATIONERY ACT

AMENDMENT PROVIDING FOR ADVANCES TO KING'S PRINTER FOR PURCHASE OF MATERIALS, ETC.

Hon. F. G. Bradley (Secretary of State) moved the second reading of Bill No. 24, to amend the Public Printing and Stationery Act.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and the house went into committee thereon, Mr. Beaudoin in the chair.

On section 1—*Requisitions*.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): Mr. Chairman, I have to confess some ignorance of what has taken place, due to my absence from the house for some days. However, when the matter was last before us, and I was present, I understood we were to receive a