

Inquiries of the Ministry

Transport discuss with the two railways the possibility of putting on additional equipment to take care of transportation for hon. members at the close of the session.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Alphonse Fournier (Minister of Public Works): Before you call the order, Mr. Speaker, which was announced last night as the first business for today, I wish to tell the house that the Minister of Reconstruction and Supply (Mr. Winters) will not be here this morning. He is not very well. We would, however, ask the house to proceed, in his absence, with the resolution respecting the trans-Canada highway. I understand that the debate was nearly concluded last night, and we wish to have the bill introduced so that hon. members may study it and have a discussion on the second reading, if there is no objection to that course. I have spoken to representatives of the various parties, and they seem to agree.

Mr. Green: May I ask whether a minister will be available who can answer questions when the resolution goes into committee?

Mr. Fournier (Hull): The minister has no parliamentary assistant, but the debate yesterday ran part of the afternoon and during the evening. The intention is that the bill be read the first time, and members will then have the details of the bill before them. If we do not adopt that procedure, I do not know just what course we can take. I do not know when the minister will be back.

Mr. Harris (Danforth): Perhaps in the meantime the leader of the house will answer the questions.

Mr. Fournier (Hull): I will do my best.

Mr. Green: May I ask the Minister of Public Works another question? Last night the Minister of Reconstruction and Supply (Mr. Winters) undertook to table today further correspondence between the dominion and the provinces concerning the trans-Canada highway. Can the Minister of Public Works make arrangements to have it tabled in the course of the debate this morning?

Mr. Fournier (Hull): I shall get in touch with my colleague's office, Mr. Speaker, and see whether the correspondence is ready. If it is, I will table it.

[Mr. Howe.]

CHINA

QUESTION AS TO RECOGNITION OF COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Brooke Claxton (Minister of National Defence): Yesterday the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew) asked a question about a meeting of commonwealth high commissioners in London which was said in a newspaper report to be related to the recognition of communist China. Such a meeting took place between the high commissioners in London, as meetings frequently do. At that meeting preliminary views were canvassed regarding the situation in China. The government here was not specially asked to be there. It was a meeting to exchange views in accordance with the practice. Those views were exchanged, but there was no agreement on any common line, and the Canadian attitude would only be made known in consequence of action taken here.

Mr. George A. Drew (Leader of the Opposition): In view of the circumstances, Mr. Speaker, and the importance of the subject, I may be permitted to express an opinion which I feel is appropriate in relation to what has been said.

The statement which has just been made indicates that there was a meeting of high commissioners last Tuesday, as the report stated. The consequences of recognition of the Moscow-dominated communist government of China are so important that before that action is taken the members of this house should be afforded an opportunity to express their opinions as to the course Canada should follow. This might well be a turning point in the whole history of our relationships in the Pacific and with the nations which find themselves in this same position. In view of the statement which has now been made on behalf of the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Pearson), will the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent), before a decision is made, consider giving the house an opportunity to express its opinion on this subject.

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister): That will depend upon the way in which events develop, Mr. Speaker. We should not like to fix a date for the discussion of the matter until we have more factual background to put before the house than we have at the present time. The situation is still that which was expressed by the Secretary of State for External Affairs. We regard recognition *de facto* of a government as something which can be done only