

Correspondence on Union Trusteeship

It would be well for us to know if there are such documents in existence. I am not prepared to suggest that all documents be released, but certainly those which relate to the press releases should be forthcoming so that we can see the extent to which the United States government attempted to interfere in a purely Canadian matter. Further, the government has complained recently that the United States revealed confidential information respecting wheat sales. Therefore I cannot see how reference to these press releases can be regarded as irrelevant to this debate.

I would like to remind the Secretary of State for External Affairs of the support the Minister of Labour received when he honestly, openly and frankly came before the house with legislation which we recognized was necessary to deal with a very serious situation. There was almost unanimous support given to the Minister of Labour to deal with that very tough and yet delicate situation. I am sure that a matter so serious as the interference of another government in our internal affairs will receive the same measure and degree of support.

It is obvious to all hon. members that the immediate problem facing the government and the board of trustees is the harassment and picketing of Canadian ships in the United States.

We have apparently reached the point, so far as the Canadian unions are concerned—

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, I hope the hon. gentleman will not misunderstand me when I rise again on a point of order. It is not that I do not believe the matter he is now discussing is not vital and important. It is. But I submit to him and to you, sir, with the greatest confidence—and I recall the discussions we had last session on this very matter—that on this motion it is not open to any hon. member to discuss the merits of the question which gives rise to the motion itself.

The motion before us is for the production of papers with regard to this matter. It is not open to any hon. member to discuss the matter itself. All he can discuss are reasons, based on precedents and parliamentary practice, why the particular motion to produce certain papers involved in the negotiations between the two governments should be accepted. This is the only issue. My hon. friend is complaining about the picketing in the United States. I am in full accord with such complaints but it is not open to us at this moment, at this hour and under this procedure, to discuss that question.

Mr. Olson: On the point of order, first of all may I say that the purpose of asking for

[Mr. Olson.]

these papers is to provide the house with the information that is vital and necessary in making the decisions that it must make to deal with the situation. It is spelled out in the motion that it is to deal with the proposed trusteeship of Canadian maritime unions. If the house is going to deal with the interference of the United States government and the possibility that the Canadian government was warned that this harassment and picketing was going to take place, then I think members of the House of Commons have the right to have a look at these documents and know all the facts.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Batten): Order. We have had three points of order raised on this matter and it is not the first time in recent days. I should like to point out that over the years a number of Speakers' rulings have been made on this particular matter explaining the narrow limits of debate on a motion of this kind. I should point out to the house that under the motion now before us members do not have the right to discuss the shipping situation on the great lakes, nor do they have the right to discuss the merits or demerits of the trusteeship. The only question before the house at the moment is whether or not these documents should be tabled and in the ensuing debate I think members should confine themselves strictly to that question.

Mr. Martineau: On a point of order, I think what the hon. member for Medicine Hat was trying to bring out was that, because of the situation with regard to great lakes shipping and the trusteeship and because of the exchange of documents it is necessary that these documents now be filed. That was the basis of his argument. I think the Secretary of State for External Affairs took absolutely the wrong view in interpreting the remarks of the hon. member, because the hon. member did not even touch upon the merits or demerits of the situation. He said that because of that situation these documents should be filed. That was the crux of his argument.

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, in closing I should like to urge the Secretary of State for External Affairs to consider the matter raised in the motion, to recall also the support that the house gave the Minister of Labour (Mr. MacEachen) when he was faced with a serious situation and to remember that if this harassment and picketing of Canadian ships in the United States goes on further action by the house may be required to deal with that situation. I earnestly plead that the minister take the house into his confidence and give hon. members the necessary information to make intelligent decisions.