

Inquiries of the Ministry

[Text]

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, the truth may be a combination of all three possibilities.

REQUIREMENT THAT BANK EMPLOYEES WORK ON HOLIDAY WEEK ENDS

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Gerald A. Regan (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Finance in relation to the revision of the Bank Act. Is the Minister aware that under its present provisions bank employees are denied long holidays such as over Easter week end, when other employees are off work on Friday, Saturday and Monday? There is a provision in the Bank Act that banks cannot be closed for more than three consecutive days; therefore bank employees have to work on Saturday morning for two or three hours on the occasion of such holiday week ends. When the Bank Act is being changed, will the Minister take under consideration the advisability of amending it so that on such holiday week ends banks will be allowed to close on four consecutive days?

Hon. Walter L. Gordon (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I share my hon. friend's solicitude for the welfare of the bank employees, but I suggest that this matter might better be dealt with when we resume the debate on the Bank Act.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

PARIS—RECEPTION OF CANADIAN MINISTER

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Paul Martineau (Pontiac-Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the right hon. Prime Minister. Is the Prime Minister giving consideration to the registration of a protest or other action regarding the reception extended to our very esteemed Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Martin) who apparently did not receive the V.I.P. red carpet treatment on his arrival in Paris?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it is not the policy of this Government to protest about the absence of red carpets. In this particular instance I have received a report from the Minister which indicates that there were some minor technical problems on his arrival, but that no discourtesy of any kind was intended and, in his own words "It was nonsense to suggest that there was". He indicated to me that he

[Mr. Grégoire.]

was completely satisfied with the welcoming arrangements; that he was met at the airport, as is customary in respect of arrivals of this kind, by two representatives of the foreign office. He also indicated that he expects to have valuable and constructive talks today with the Foreign Minister, whose guest he will be at luncheon, for which arrangement he is very grateful. They are friends of long standing and get along very well. Mr. Martin is having a very happy visit in Paris today.

Mr. Martineau: I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Is the Prime Minister satisfied that the Minister's tender feelings were not hurt?

Mr. Pearson: The Minister's telegram to me indicates, as I have just said, that he is very happy about everything.

Mr. Herridge: Mr. Speaker, let me say that we are all delighted to know that our home-spun Minister received an appropriate welcome.

CANADIAN CONFEDERATION

REPORTED STATEMENT BY BRITISH COLUMBIA MINISTER

On the orders of the day:

Mr. H. W. Herridge (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, as a staunch believer in Confederation I wish to address a question to the right hon. Prime Minister. In view of the reported statement made by Hon. Ralph Loffmark, the British Columbia Minister of Trade and Commerce, to the effect that the British Columbia cabinet has recently discussed secession from Confederation, will the Prime Minister inform the House whether he has received any official communication from the Government of British Columbia in respect of this most calamitous announcement?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am most grateful to my hon. friend who, with his customary courtesy has given me notice of this important question, but his notice did not refer to a "lamentable statement"; it referred to a "dramatic development". I am prepared to deal with the referred to dramatic development by suggesting that while there may have been a lamentable statement, there has been no dramatic development. The hon. Member's own Premier has very often spoken in warm terms of Confederation and all it means to British Columbia. Perhaps Mr. Loffmark is just preparing for the forthcoming Federal-Provincial Conference, Mr. Speaker.