

*Supply—External Affairs*

I would like to say, Mr. Chairman, first of all that diplomatic relations between Canada and Gabon were never established. The ambassador for Gabon had yet to present his credentials to the government in Ottawa, just as the Canadian ambassador had to present his to the government of Gabon. Still, we are told: We are breaking our relations.

Canada, which has seldom used that formula in the past, like a Don Quixote at the conquest of a windmill, suddenly says it breaks off relations which had never existed, with a very small country, Gabon. That almost takes on an international aspect. What must be done? Is Canada going to declare war on Gabon? The fact remains that relations are broken off which never existed.

Can the hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs explain to us how this new formula works out in international affairs? How can relations be broken off when they have never existed? Indeed, it is a mystery to me how relations can be broken off which have yet to be established.

But, before giving the hon. minister time to answer this question, I should like to speak about the fundamental problem.

There are two conflicts in this overall problem. The first opposes the Ottawa government and the Quebec government; the second the Ottawa government and the government of Gabon.

The conflict between the Ottawa government and the Quebec government is as follows: A meeting of the ministers of education of French-speaking countries is being held in Gabon. Quebec says: Under the British North America Act, education is a provincial matter, and therefore, falls within the Quebec jurisdiction, as Quebec is the only French-speaking province in Canada. As education is a provincial matter: it falls to Quebec to attend and take part in those meetings on education which group French-speaking countries.

On the other hand, the federal government says: Yes, but this is external relations, because an invitation is extended by a sovereign country, Gabon, to another sovereign country, Canada; this is therefore a question of external relations. Now, as external relations are the responsibility of the federal government, the hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs for Canada tells us: Gabon should have invited the federal government.

However, the purpose of that meeting was not to deal with international matters or

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external relations, but with educational problems common to French-speaking countries. In order to achieve that aim, the ministers of education had to get together and to that end, invitations had to be sent from one country to the other.

The invitation which brought about that conflict is only a means of achieving that purpose, namely to discuss problems concerning education which comes under provincial jurisdiction. Who is right, then? Is it the provincial authorities who look after education or the federal authorities who felt entitled to get the invitation? Which point is more important? Is it the discussion on education or the invitation to the conference? Undoubtedly, it was a discussion on education, and this concerns Quebec authorities.

The point of view of the government of the province of Quebec was this: in the field of education, the only jurisdiction is provincial. On the other hand, the federal government was affirming its jurisdiction over external affairs. But the only thing that had something to do with this field was the invitation. For Quebec, it was a question of discussing educational matters, over which the provinces, in this case Quebec, have exclusive jurisdiction.

Therefore, this implied nothing essential for Ottawa. In fact, the only thing involved was something purely incidental, that is to say an invitation, whereas for Quebec it had to do with educational matters, therefore with something essential over which the province has jurisdiction.

● (9:50 p.m.)

The conflict between Ottawa and the Republic of Gabon stems from the fact that Gabon did not invite the minister of education in Ottawa, since it sent invitations to the ministers of education of French-speaking countries. Since there is no minister of education in Ottawa, Gabon could not invite anyone from the federal department. On the other hand, if Gabon had invited the hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs, he could not have attended the talks on education in Libreville, because he is not a minister of education but the Secretary of State for External Affairs. The invitation was not extended to ministers of external affairs but only to ministers of education, and how could the minister of education in Ottawa have been invited when he does not exist? If the Libreville government had sent an invitation addressed to the hon. minister of education,