

Inquiries of the Ministry

while he is a new member at this time has had previous experience in this house, the fact that the question he is posing at the moment would be more appropriate for the order paper.

Mr. Byrne: Mr. Speaker, I have already indicated that there is serious unrest amongst civil servants in Canada. This is a question which is of great importance at this time.

Mr. Speaker: With the greatest respect to the hon. member, I am of the opinion that questions should seek information and not proffer it.

Hon. Paul Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, may I with great respect suggest that the question was a proper one. The hon. gentleman was seeking to ascertain what was government policy with regard to the kind of negotiations, or instrument for negotiation, through which the civil service wished to carry on talks with the government. Surely that is a proper question. I think the hon. gentleman, under our rules and traditions, should not be denied the opportunity of putting that question.

Mr. Speaker: In reply to the hon. member for Essex East I feel that although the intentions of the hon. member for Kootenay East may have been legitimate, they did not appear to be so in the form in which the question was asked.

[*Later:*]

Mr. Byrne: May I put my question in somewhat different form to the Prime Minister in the hope that he may see fit to answer it. Would the Prime Minister inform the house what consideration is being given to the civil service request that group B be considered for increases, and will all increases be made retroactive to October 1?

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I really do not see any difference between the earlier question and the present one.

HEALTH AND WELFARE**THALIDOMIDE—REQUEST FOR CONSIDERATION BY COMMITTEE**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. In view of the many in the country who are concerned about the matter, will the government consider setting up a committee of the house to examine into the circumstances surrounding the sale and distribution

[*Mr. Speaker.*]

of thalidomide, to consider what is being done to aid the victims, and to take steps to prevent a recurrence of such a tragedy?

Hon. J. W. Monteith (Minister of National Health and Welfare): As hon. members have read in the speech from the throne, steps are being taken by way of amendment to the Food and Drugs Act, and when they are introduced I am sure every opportunity will be given to all hon. members to discuss the subject.

Mr. Knowles: If the minister cannot answer my question then I shall put a supplementary one. After the amending bill has been given second reading will it be referred to a committee of the house?

Mr. Monteith: No, I cannot say that.

[*Later:*]

Mr. D. R. Mitchell (Sudbury): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. Can the minister advise whether immediate consideration is being given to the separation of the food and drug directorate in his department, which will result in better inspection service?

Mr. Monteith: No, Mr. Speaker.

POWER**COLUMBIA RIVER—REFERENCE OF TREATY TO HOUSE COMMITTEE**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Harold E. Winch (Vancouver East): I wish to direct a question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs and ask him whether the commitment he made during the 24th parliament that the Columbia river treaty would be referred to the external affairs committee will be honoured.

Hon. Howard C. Green (Secretary of State for External Affairs): If I remember the commitment correctly, it was that the treaty would be referred to the external affairs committee before ratification.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**INQUIRY AS TO EXTENSION OF TERRITORIAL WATERS**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. J. R. Tucker (Trinity-Conception): I wish to direct a question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Is the minister in a position to make any announcement with regard to the negotiations to extend the present fishing limits, which are so important to our fishing industry?

Hon. Howard C. Green (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, since the end of the second conference on the law of