

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, October 31, 1969

The House met at 11 a.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INDIAN AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

REFERENCE OF ANNUAL REPORT TO STANDING COMMITTEE

Hon. G. J. McIlraith (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the annual report of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1968, be referred to the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development;

And that the evidence adduced by the committee in its consideration of the aforementioned matter during the first session of the twenty-eighth Parliament be referred to the committee.

Motion agreed to.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

INFLATION—PROPOSALS OF PRICES AND INCOMES COMMISSION

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Prime Minister could state the position of his government with regard to the accusation made by Russell Bell, director of research for the Canadian Labour Congress, who has made the charge that the Prices and Incomes Commission had no clearly formed ideas to place before the interested parties, that meaningful discussion in these circumstances became virtually impossible and that in these circumstances the leaders of the CLC and the Confederation of National Trade Unions had really no choice but to reject the voluntary guidelines?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I will ensure that the commission takes note of this accusation.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, part of the concern of Mr. Bell appears to be in connection with the application of guidelines to other forms of income. Has the government satisfied itself that the proposals being placed before the private sector of the economy by the Prices and Incomes Commission do in fact involve equitable proposals relating to incomes generally? I ask this question, Mr. Speaker, in view of the obvious importance to all of us of some system of voluntary restraints being adopted and in view of the obvious interest of the government in seeing that every possible chance of success is attained.

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I think there is some confusion in the mind of the Leader of the Opposition as to the role this commission is to perform. We have taken the position from the outset, and it has been made quite clear to parliament, that the commission has an independent operation of its own. It was set up by the government in order to deal with various sectors of the economy as it best saw fit. It has approached the government with certain representations. I understand we have had discussions with members of the commission on certain proposals for governmental action. We have indeed acted on some of them as we showed in the guidelines exercise last summer and since, but we are not second-guessing the commission.

I repeat what I said yesterday to the Leader of the Opposition. We have not asked the commission to report to us in any detail on what it is doing with either the unions or the management sector of the economy, nor do we think we should. If the Leader of the Opposition thinks that the terms of reference might be altered and that we should have the commission reporting every day to the government or to parliament, perhaps he could make a proposition, which I would be delighted to pursue.

Mr. Stanfield: A further supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Is it the position of the government that it is appropriate for the government of Canada to delegate to an independent commission responsibility for decision-making in an area that has become of very central importance to the successful government of this country?