

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. George Muir (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the minister for his courtesy in giving me a copy of the departmental report prior to reading it into the record.

I realize of course that the means of transportation used by the people in question does not fall within the purview of responsibility of his department. Nevertheless, the fact that some were brought all the way from Mexico in a relatively small over-crowded truck—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I do not believe the hon. member can make a statement at this time in answer to the reply given by the minister. He may ask a supplementary question.

Mr. Muir (Lisgar): Then I will substitute a question, Mr. Speaker. I thought the minister was going to make the statement on motions. Would the minister not agree that, since many of these people were brought from Mexico in a relatively small, overcrowded truck in which, as he said, one family at least was reported to be suffering from dysentery, this merits a warning from the minister that the federal government will in no way condone this practice in the future?

Mr. Nicholson: With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, it is not a question of condoning practices. The immigration legislation in this country does not permit the department to govern the means by which Canadian citizens must return to this country. The majority of these people, as I stated, are Canadians. Others have been accompanied by relatives. We have no way of governing how they travel: they can come on foot, by bicycle, on horseback, or in any other way, if they are returning Canadians.

Mr. Rapp: They are good citizens, too.

Mr. Lawrence E. Kindt (MacLeod): Mr. Speaker, may I ask the minister the number in the party?

Mr. Nicholson: I am informed that there were a series of groups which arrived at different times. They were in groups, I believe, not one party.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**INDIA—ADDITIONAL AID TO RELIEVE FAMINE CONDITION—AVAILABILITY OF TECHNOLOGICAL ASSISTANCE**

On the orders of the day:

Hon. J. A. MacLean (Queens): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Secretary of State for

[Mr. Nicholson.]

External Affairs I should like to address a question to the Prime Minister. Is he in a position to give the house any further information with regard to the government's response to requests from India for aid in the form of grain, to help alleviate the famine conditions in that country.

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the right hon. Leader of the Opposition asked me this question on Friday and I said I hoped to be able to reply today. Over the week end a cabinet committee gave further consideration to the form the assistance should take. That report was made to me only at lunchtime. It will be discussed at cabinet tomorrow morning, and on Tuesday afternoon I will be able, I believe, to make a statement on the details of the program. I am sorry I am not able to do it today.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the other day the minister made the statement that some 30 million bushels, I think it was, of wheat had been delivered to India. Can the Prime Minister say whether that delivery was made mainly under the Colombo plan, or was it in any way part of a relief plan, particularly a famine relief plan?

Mr. Pearson: Some of it was delivered under the Colombo plan. A great deal of it was delivered to meet the famine situation last spring. What we are considering now are very substantial additional amounts to deal with the particular famine situation. We hope that the aggregate which will be shipped to India will be capable of being maintained by us next year when there may be difficulties too.

Mr. David MacDonald (Prince): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether the Prime Minister could tell us if there is also anticipated in this report an increased availability of technological assistance to India, which seems to be one of the major problems in this, as in other instances.

Mr. Pearson: I cannot report on that matter, Mr. Speaker. I will look into it. I know there has been some difficulty in this regard. I know also that India has been concentrating on the importation of fertilizers as a way of meeting the long range problem. But I will look into that question.