

*Inquiries of the Ministry*

Mines Limited to determine the nature of possible federal assistance to the company. As such it would not be in the public interest to release the papers concerned. Under the circumstances I would hope that the hon. member would withdraw his motion.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, in my view the public interest calls for the motion to be put.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is it the wish of the House that the motion be put?

**Mr. MacEachen:** Transfer for debate.

**Mr. Speaker:** Transferred for debate.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jerome:** Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining notices of motions be allowed to stand.

[English]

**Mr. Speaker:** Shall the remaining Notices of Motions stand?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

## EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

## POSSIBLE WITHDRAWALS FROM COMMONWEALTH—REPORTED STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER—CANADIAN POSITION

**Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Acting Prime Minister based upon the serious statement reported to have been made by the Prime Minister in Singapore to the effect that if a number of other countries withdraw from the Commonwealth perhaps Canada will also do so to prove its purity. Can the Acting Prime Minister advise if it is Canadian policy to depart from the Commonwealth by reason of the reduction of membership in that organization and, if so, can he advise the number of departees which would be required to prompt such withdrawal action by this country?

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, it is the purpose of this government, and certainly it has been the purpose of the Prime Minister in recent weeks, to reinforce the unity of the Commonwealth.

**Mr. Macquarrie:** Mr. Speaker, can the House and the country be assured by the government that Canada's membership in organizations in which it once served usefully will not be withdrawn by Prime Ministerial fiat but only after discussion in this parliament?

**Mr. Sharp:** Mr. Speaker, I do hope, and I am sure the hon. member agrees with me, that there will be no

[Mr. Buchanan.]

withdrawals from the Commonwealth on this occasion but, as the Prime Minister said, if the Commonwealth were to fall apart then I do not think the hon. member would suggest we should remain.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert):** Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the Secretary of State for External Affairs would not be facetious on a matter such as this. Will he repudiate once and for all the egregious nonsense that is reported to have been uttered by the Prime Minister, or is this another step in the erosion of our relations within the Commonwealth?

**Mr. Sharp:** Mr. Speaker, the most egregious nonsense I read yesterday was a statement by the right hon. member for Prince Albert.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Mr. Speaker, I now ask the Acting Prime Minister to repudiate this frightful statement which indicates that the government would act without regard to the wishes of the Canadian people in order to bring about the end of the Commonwealth.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

## RUSSIAN NAVAL PENETRATION OF INDIAN OCEAN

**Mr. W. B. Nesbitt (Oxford):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a supplementary question to the Acting Prime Minister. Is it the government's view, when arriving at its policy concerning the supplying of naval arms to South Africa by the United Kingdom, that Soviet naval penetration of the Indian Ocean is of little or no consequence to the political and military balance of the world?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member is directing his question in a general way. He is inviting the Acting Prime Minister or the minister speaking on behalf of the government to express an opinion. I would not think that the question as asked is in order. The hon. member may wish to rephrase it.

**Mr. Nesbitt:** I am sorry, Your Honour, if it seemed to be a vague question. I thought it was a direct question. May I put it this way: is it the government's view that the Soviet military penetration of the Indian Ocean is of no consequence to the world's political and military balance?

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether I quite understand the implication of the question.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Sharp:** Is the hon. gentleman intending to suggest that we should not comply with the Security Council resolution on the supply of arms to South Africa?

**An hon. Member:** Answer the question.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.