

Inquiries of the Ministry

[Text]

Mr. Speaker: Order. In view of the shortness of the question period today I suggest that the minister might make a reply tomorrow on motions or at some other time in order to conserve the time for questions.

REQUEST FOR ROYAL COMMISSION INQUIRY
INTO SITUATION IN EAST

On the orders of the day:

[Translation]

Mr. L. J. Pigeon (Joliette-L'Assomption-Montcalm): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Agriculture I wish to direct a question to the Prime Minister.

Does the government intend to set up a royal commission on the precarious state of agriculture in eastern Canada, in view of the fact that hon. Mr. Courcy, minister of agriculture of the province of Quebec stated he was in favour of such a royal commission?

[Text]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Northwest Territories.

Mr. Pigeon: Mr. Speaker, I think the Prime Minister was ready to answer.

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): I was just going to say I was going to look into the matter.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

CYPRUS—EXTENSION OF PERIOD OF COMMITMENT OF CANADIAN FORCE

On the orders of the day:

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Lessard (Lake St. John): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

We have asked him many times if the mandate of the Canadian forces assigned to the United Nations would be renewed within three months. The minister replied that the government had not taken any decision on the matter. Therefore, how can he explain the fact that we learn today, from a statement made by the Minister of National Defence, that the mandate of the Canadian troops in Cyprus will be extended by three additional months and probably for an indefinite period?

Hon. Paul Martin (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I do not think the Minister of National Defence made a statement in that sense. I have his statement before me and, for the moment, I cannot add anything, except to repeat what I told the hon. member for Villeneuve (Mr. Caouette) the

[Mr. Ricard.]

other day, namely, that when the security council will have taken a decision I will be in a position to make a statement on behalf of the government.

Mr. Lessard (Lake St. John): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Could the Secretary of State for External Affairs exercise some pressure on his colleague the Minister of National Defence, in order that Canadian forces rotate every three instead of every six months, as now proposed? In my opinion, six months is too long a period and the rotation period should be reduced to three months.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, there is of course no reason to do what the hon. member is asking me.

[Text]

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. May I ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs if he can give the house the assurance that in the event the security council decides to extend the term during which the peace keeping forces in Cyprus will continue to operate, the Canadian government will be prepared to announce that Canada will continue its contribution to the peace keeping forces for that period?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Yes, sir.

Mr. D. V. Pugh (Okanagan Boundary): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Can the Secretary of State for External Affairs tell us the content of the communiqué from the Minister of National Defence with regard to the duration of time in Cyprus?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, what I said to the hon. member for Lake St. John who asked me the question, was that there was nothing in the statement attributed to the Minister of National Defence in Cyprus—warranting the conclusion which the hon. member with the best of intentions I know—reached. The Minister of National Defence was dealing with the question of rotation of troops.

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, my question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs is on a related subject. In view of the statement of the secretary general of the United Nations that the problem of arms reaching Cyprus is critical and may be a decisive factor in determining the ability of the United Nations efforts in Cyprus to succeed, can the minister tell the house what action, if any, has been taken or is contemplated by the government, either through the