

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Speaker: I would suggest to the hon. member that his question is very general and that the information he seeks would be better suited to a statement on motions by the minister. Perhaps the hon. member might so rephrase his question.

Mr. Dumont: Ten o'clock, Mr. Speaker.

[*English*]

CANADIAN SOVEREIGNTY

NEGOTIATIONS WITH UNITED STATES RESPECTING NORTHWEST PASSAGE

Mr. W. B. Nesbitt (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Is the minister or any person in his department or in any other department at present negotiating or carrying on discussions with the United States of America about the degree of sovereignty Canada will be permitted to exercise over those Arctic waters immediately adjacent to the north coast of mainland Canada, usually known as the Northwest Passage?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, unlike the hon. gentleman, I do not think we require the permission of any country in the world to assert our sovereignty.

Mr. Baldwin: Why don't you do it, then?

Mr. Nesbitt: I shall excuse the minister's flippant remark, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister please answer my question? Are discussions or negotiations going on with the government of the United States over the question of sovereignty in this area?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, we do not negotiate our sovereignty with anyone.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nesbitt: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I will put the question in such form that even the minister can understand it. Are discussions going on with the United States government concerning the Arctic waters immediately adjacent to the north coast of the Canadian mainland? In particular, are discussions going on about the passage of United States ships through those waters and the right to that passage?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, I think the only part of the question that I can answer directly, because I do not understand the first part of the question, is the second part—

Mr. Nesbitt: Come off it!

Mr. Sharp: With regard to the second part, we are not having any discussions with the United States government regarding the passage of any vessel through our waters.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister discuss with his colleague, the President of the Privy Council, bringing back to the House for discussion the motion in the name of the hon. member for Athabasca so that members on both sides of the House can express their views on the vacillating and wishy-washy attitude of the Prime Minister on this issue?

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

PROPOSED RECOGNITION OF COMMUNIST CHINA

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, this seems to be the day of the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Today is a particularly important anniversary. It was a year ago today that the Canadian government decided to carry on negotiations, if I can use that expression, with Communist China regarding recognition. Will the minister say whether negotiations are going on? Have there been any meetings in recent days in Stockholm? Can the minister make a statement which will not approach in optimism that which he made nine months ago when he said that recognition was just around the corner?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, if I may answer the questions in order, yes, negotiations are going on. We have had recent meetings and we expect to have others very soon. Never at any time did I say anything except that I thought the negotiations would be long, difficult and, I hoped, successful.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Does the minister intend to continue these negotiations of servile futility—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact it is now suggested that Communist China has promised military aid to the Arab side in the conflict in the Middle East, I ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs whether that has changed Canada's attitude concerning its recognition of Communist China?