

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, March 16, 1956

The house met at eleven o'clock.

RAILWAYS AND SHIPPING

CONCURRENCE IN FIRST REPORT OF SESSIONAL COMMITTEE

Mr. H. P. Cavers (Lincoln) presented the first report of the sessional committee on railways and shipping owned, operated and controlled by the government, and moved that the report be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

ISRAEL—APPROVAL OF PERMITS FOR ARMS SHIPMENTS

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a short statement about arms shipments. In accord with the policy of the government to give consideration to all applications for arms shipments as they come forward, as I have stated in the house on more than one occasion is being done, yesterday the cabinet approved three such applications for Israel. Those applications were considered in the light of the tensions now existing in the Middle East, as I said they would be when they came before the cabinet, and it was felt that although the basic tensions remained there has been in the last few days some easing of the apprehensions that existed when Sir John Glubb was removed from control of the Arab legion and when there were being some clashes on lake Tiberias. There are now discussions going on as to how the United Nations might intervene effectively in the interest of facilitating a peaceful solution of the problem.

The first of the applications approved was for 1,754 units of 25-pounder ammunition which had been before the cabinet for some time and which has been referred to more than once in this house.

Two other applications were submitted to the cabinet yesterday for defence equipment for Israel and were approved with export permits being granted. One concerned a small order for electronic equipment valued at \$1,200 consisting of 40 units for converting wireless sets from direct to alternating current. The other covers \$136,361.59 worth of spare parts for Sherman M-IV tanks.

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The history of this order is that in 1954 an export permit was granted for an order for Israel valued at \$565,071.36 for tank parts without breech blocks or arms. This order has been referred to already on earlier occasions, on January 24 and January 26, by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Pearson). Full delivery did not take place during the validity of this permit which expired on July 16, 1955. A new permit with a validity for six months only was approved on July 26, 1955, to cover the undelivered portion of the order originally placed in 1954. The second permit expired on January 26, 1956, with delivery still uncompleted.

Hon. members will remember that in the meantime there was a temporary suspension of all shipments to the Middle East which was imposed on January 20. Application was made on February 3 for a permit to cover the unshipped balance amounting in value to \$136,361.59 and it was that application which was referred yesterday to the cabinet and approved.

[Later:]

MIDDLE EAST—INQUIRY AS TO PENDING APPLICATIONS FOR ARMS SHIPMENTS

On the orders of the day:

Hon. George A. Drew (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Prime Minister. In view of the fact that the government has announced this morning a decision in regard to arms shipments, will the Prime Minister tell the house whether there are any other applications pending from any of the countries in the Middle East at this time and, if so, what countries and what applications they are?

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister): There are two applications from the government of Israel which came before the cabinet yesterday and with respect to which decision was deferred. If and when a decision is made on those applications, an immediate announcement will be made to the house.

Mr. Drew: I wish to ask a supplementary question in regard to that. Has the government now adopted a policy of dealing with shipments of arms and military equipment by order in council?