

Inquiries of the Ministry

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: There is not unanimous consent and the motion cannot be put.

Mr. Diefenbaker: It was opposed by Liberal party members and only by Liberals.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

AID FOR REFUGEES FROM EAST PAKISTAN—TENSION ON INDIA-PAKISTAN BORDER—GOVERNMENT POSITION RESPECTING PAKISTAN

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, can the Secretary of State for External Affairs tell us about any arrangement regarding aid for the refugees from East Pakistan now in West Bengal? Is anything effective being arranged to assist these refugees who are now reported by the government of India to number in the millions? What is Canada doing in this connection?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as I said in reply to a similar question at the end of last week, the government is giving sympathetic consideration to the request that has been received for international aid for the Pakistan refugees who are in India. This effort is being co-ordinated through the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees, and we are now in the process of deciding what sum of money it would be appropriate for Canada to contribute.

Mr. Stanfield: Has the Secretary of State for External Affairs anything to report with regard to the possibility of tension along the border between India and Pakistan? Is the government taking any position with regard to this situation?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, the government recognizes that the movement of refugees across the border from Pakistan into India is in itself a cause of very great tension. We have been advising both the Indian and Pakistani governments to do everything they can to avoid an escalation of this conflict. The problem, however, is extremely serious and we recognize it as such. For the time being at least we feel that the most effective thing we can do is provide some aid to the refugees who are there.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs what the position of the government is toward the government of Pakistan. For example, does the government of Canada believe that pressure should be put on the government of Pakistan to achieve a settlement through the World Bank, for example, refusing to give any additional time with regard to payments that are due? Does the government of Canada believe it should become involved in pressure

[Mr. Speaker.]

of this sort or, on the other hand, does it feel it should remain aloof and keep its hands off as far as Pakistan is concerned?

Mr. Sharp: As I understand it, Mr. Speaker, the situation is that the government of Pakistan has unilaterally declared a moratorium. The various countries concerned have been studying this situation and deciding how best to cope with what appears to be the bankruptcy of the Pakistan government. As far as aid is concerned, it is a very difficult question of judgment how far to go in providing aid under these circumstances. Like Canada, I think that most countries of the world are operating very carefully. We certainly do not want to cause additional hardship to any of the people of Pakistan, in the east or west, by denying projects that can be of immediate assistance. Nevertheless, it is recognized that the aid must be seen to be going toward helping the people on both sides.

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Is an effort being made to assure that Canadian aid is not used to bolster the military repression of East Pakistan?

Mr. Sharp: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

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CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY

REDUCTION OF EMPLOYEES' AND PENSIONERS' PASS PRIVILEGES

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. In view of the fact that the Canadian Pacific Railway has reduced, almost to the point of elimination, the pass privileges accorded its employees and pensioners, and in view of the fact that these privileges have been regarded as part of the earnings of Canadian Pacific employees, will the minister take up this matter with either the Canadian Pacific Railway or the Canadian Transport Commission in the hope that this situation can be rectified?

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Transport): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I certainly will. I was not aware that this situation had occurred. I quite agree with the hon. member that the very least a pensioner can have is the ability to travel on the railway which he served for so long.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the answer of the minister, but will he take note of the fact that the reduction of pass privileges applies to employees as well as to pensioners?

Mr. Jamieson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I should have also indicated that I would think it is not a matter for the Canadian Transport Commission. It is a matter of appealing to the good sense, if you like, of the Canadian Pacific Railway. I will try to do that.