

Oral Questions

Mr. Wagner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Is the Minister of Finance aware of rumours reported this morning by Mr. Claude Lemelin in the newspaper *Le Devoir* that there is dissension in the preparation of his budget?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member knows he cannot ask a minister whether he is aware of a report that may have been published in a newspaper. In those terms the question is out of order.

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[*English*]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**VIET NAM—CEASE-FIRE AGREEMENT—CANADIAN PARTICIPATION IN SUPERVISORY COMMISSION**

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I have one or two questions for the Secretary of State for External Affairs having to do with the dispatch of Canadian personnel as part of the international control and supervisory commission under the Viet Nam peace agreement. In view of the fact that Article 18 of the main agreement specifically states that the international commission of control and supervision shall be composed of representatives of four countries and then names them—Canada, Hungary, Indonesia and Poland—and in view of the fact it is rather hard to imagine that those countries would be named in the agreement without their consent, I would ask the minister whether Canada was approached for its consent and, if so, by whom, and was consent given to Canada being named in the main agreement as one of the four countries to participate in the commission?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as I have explained to the House previously, it was intimated to us that we might be called upon to be a member of the commission. We did not at that time give our agreement. We have taken the attitude, which I have explained many times in the House, that whether we were participants would depend upon the terms of the agreement and upon the terms of the protocol under which the supervisory commission would operate. We have received invitations from all four parties to the cease-fire agreement to participate. We have notified each of them of the announcement I made in the House of Commons and of the terms upon which we are prepared to participate.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, there are one or two brief supplementary questions I should like to ask. Do I understand from the minister that Canada did not agree at the time it had an intimation and that despite Canada's failure to agree the parties to the agreement stated categorically that the commission shall consist of representatives of certain countries, including Canada? Is the minister telling us that the parties to the agreement included Canada despite Canada's failure to agree?

Mr. Sharp: Yes, Mr. Speaker, that is the situation. The parties to the agreement did include Canada notwithstanding the reservations I had expressed on behalf of the government. All four parties, not just the United States,

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are apparently very anxious that Canada should be a member. They knew of our reservations and conditions, and I have expressed them in this House and elsewhere and conveyed them to all the parties. Notwithstanding that, Canada was included. We have made a decision subsequently, of course, that if the agreements are signed in their present form we will participate for an initial period of 60 days.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I have one more supplementary question which follows clearly on what the minister has just said. The minister has informed the House on a number of occasions that Canada's agreement to be a member of the commission now is for a trial period of 60 days. May I ask him how that can be consonant with the provision in the agreement for the international control and supervisory commission that a member of the international commission may withdraw by giving three months' notice by means of a note to the four parties and I take that from Article 17 of the Agreement.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest to the hon. member that that is argument or debate.

An hon. Member: Oh, no!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member may disagree, but this is my opinion. The hon. member wants the minister to explain how one situation can be reconciled with another, how one is consonant with another. That is not seeking information; that is debate.

Mr. Lewis: I appreciate your comment, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I might be permitted to rephrase my question? In view of the provision in Article 17 of the protocol dealing with the international commission that a member of the commission can withdraw only by giving three months' notice, has the government an assurance from the parties to the agreement in Viet Nam that they accept our 60 day notice rather than three month's notice?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, we have had no intimation from any of the parties to the agreement or any of the other proposed members of the commission that we would be unacceptable for a period of 60 days. To be quite clear about this, as soon as the agreements are signed in Paris I shall be sending a note confirming this in writing so that there is no possibility of any confusion.

CYPRUS—REPORTED POSSIBILITY OF CIVIL WAR—INSTRUCTIONS TO COMMANDER OF CANADIAN ELEMENT IN PEACEKEEPING FORCE

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of National Defence. In view of the AP dispatch from Cyprus to the effect that a civil war may break out on that island momentarily, and as Canada has a peacekeeping force on that island of some 600 men, would the minister advise the House what reports he has received from the commander of the Canadian force in Cyprus on that matter and what instructions he has given his commander to be followed in case civil war does actually break out?