

*Prime Minister's Meeting in Washington*

oil policy. Certainly there is more insecurity and apparently there is a greater danger to the Canadian oil industry today than there has been for ten years or more. The importance of the decision to hold meetings between officials of the Canadian and U.S. governments on this question is obvious enough. I assume that no other consensus was reached by the Prime Minister and the President, and I hope that at some stage we may have some further enlightenment from the Prime Minister as to what proposals, if any, were put forward on behalf of Canada. I suggest that in recent times there has been far too much secrecy about the oil policy. We need to know where we stand. Indeed, I think it would be useful for this house to contribute to the position that the government of Canada should take concerning our petroleum industry.

• (2:10 p.m.)

No serious consideration has been given by the government to the development of a national oil policy and this has certainly caused great concern in western Canada and elsewhere, where the importance of a strong Canadian oil policy is recognized. I hope it will be possible for one of our standing committees to inquire publicly into the requirements of an up to date national oil policy and to call in for consultation representatives of the industry.

On the question of wheat, it was agreed, I gather, that our two countries would press for a meeting of the major exporting countries. Again, this was the obvious decision for Prime Minister and President to take. There is of course a grave situation confronting Canada and our western wheat growers, and I wonder whether as a result of the meetings between the President and the Prime Minister we have in fact agreed on an approach to be taken at such a meeting of exporters and, if not, whether we contemplate coming to some agreement in this regard before the meeting takes place. Our grain exporters and farmers need to know what approach is to be taken, with a view to restoring our position in the world markets. Farmers have experienced a difficult year and they are now trying to make their plans.

The fact that the A.B.M. decision and the meetings in Washington came so close together served to focus attention on the uncertainty which still exists as to the nature of relations between Canada and the United States,

[Mr. Stanfield.]

particularly in connection with defence. I suggest the Prime Minister has done nothing so far to reduce this uncertainty. He did not indicate when parliament or the country could expect a definite statement with regard to the decision of President Nixon to proceed with the so-called Safeguard A.B.M. system. I suggest to the Prime Minister that he is really running out of excuses to hide behind.

During the discussions in this house on the subject last week, the right hon. gentleman indicated that he wished to remain silent on the question of Canada's stake in this matter, so that he could feel free to condemn the whole policy in the name of humanity and world peace. He also left the impression that the President's decision had been practically sprung upon us and that Canada had been taken almost unaware. I hope we shall be told in due course whether the Prime Minister made it clear to the President of the United States that we expect to be consulted well in advance of such decisions being taken. The fact is, I suggest, that the explanation given by the Prime Minister and the government so far to avoid taking up a position on the question of consultation and on the question of our attitude toward this decision by the United States is really not very convincing. We are entitled to know when the country will be informed as to the government's decision.

A source of disappointment to me also is the absence of any reference to the Nigerian problem. The concern of President Nixon is well known. Statements during his election campaign, money support given to relief efforts since his inauguration, and especially the making available to church relief agencies of government planes at nominal prices—a policy we urged on this government six months ago—are all concrete evidence of the President's concern that the suffering should end. In addition, the President's personal representative has just returned from that part of Africa to report on the relief situation in Biafra and, incidentally, to condemn Nigerian attacks on non-military targets.

I express the hope that the Prime Minister will use the good rapport he has established with President Nixon to ensure frequent contact with him in connection with this grave problem. I submit that plans should be made jointly to see that the airstrip to be built by Canairelief is in fact made operational. Planning should start now at government level to ensure that the most effective use possible is made of this strip, and joint Canada-United States initiative taken to slow down or halt the flow of arms.