

*Inquiries of the Ministry***EXTERNAL AFFAIRS****NATO—REPORTED INTENTION OF PORTUGAL TO WITHDRAW**

On the orders of the day:

**Mr. W. B. Nesbitt (Oxford):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Has the minister or our representative to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Paris received any communication concerning the reported withdrawal of Portugal from NATO?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Secretary of State for External Affairs):** No, Mr. Speaker.

**FINANCE****REPORTED DISCRIMINATION BY BANKS IN GRANTING LOANS TO WOMEN**

On the orders of the day:

**Mr. H. W. Herridge (Kootenay West):** I wish to address a question to the Minister of Finance as one who is intellectually opposed to discrimination on the basis of sex. Has the minister's attention been drawn to press reports to the effect that loans to women have been refused by the Industrial Development Bank and other banks, simply on the grounds that they were women? Would the minister make inquiries of the Industrial Development Bank and other banks to determine their practice in this respect?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I invite the hon. member to place his question on the order paper.

**U.S. GUIDE LINES—EFFECT ON BALANCE OF PAYMENTS DEFICIT**

On the orders of the day:

**Hon. J. W. Monteith (Perth):** I have a question for the Minister of Finance. In view of the sharp increase in the deficit balance of payments from \$433 million in 1964 to \$1,136 million in 1965, largely attributed by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics to an increased deficit with the United States, does the Canadian government plan to take further steps to counteract the effect of the United States guide lines in so far as direct investment is concerned?

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Minister of Finance):** I doubt very much whether United States guide lines have anything to do with this particular problem. I do share the concern of the hon. member about a deficit in our balance of payments, particularly if it showed

[Mr. Pearson.]

signs of becoming excessive. It is related directly, of course, to the prosperity in our country because Canada has a tendency to import, particularly machinery, in a period of very rapid expansion such as the one through which we are proceeding.

In my budget I intend to have something to say about this matter. I think the measures I will be proposing then will do something to improve our balance of payments situation.

**Mr. Monteith:** May I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister say what was the reason for the sharply diminished merchandise trade balance with other countries, down to \$101 million from \$700 million in 1964?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I suggest the hon. member is inviting a debate now, and that is a question which cannot be considered.

[Later:]

**Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton North and Victoria):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance. A few moments ago, in reply to a question, he referred to the great prosperity in this country. May I ask him whether he has read the recent report on poverty in Canada in general, and in particular with reference to—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. This is a question for the order paper.

**BREAD****GOVERNMENT ACTION FOLLOWING PRICE INCREASE**

On the orders of the day:

**Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, on February 14 I directed the following question to the Prime Minister:

In view of the very steep increases in the price of bread, what does the government intend to do in that connection? Has there been any investigation made by the appropriate department as to whether the concerted increases are justified, and does the government consider that the explanation given in today's press, to the effect that the pension plan and minimum wage plan are costing money and that the result of those increases in taxation is an exaction, together with the increases in the costs of fats and powdered milk, justifies this very heavy, further imposition on the people?

The Prime Minister replied as follows:

Without accepting the reasons given for the increase, I shall be glad to make inquiries and make a statement in due course.

The events of the last few days again emphasize the need for a statement. I wonder if, after more than a month, the Prime