

Oral Questions

Hon. James Richardson (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, there will be no decision about the use of the Canadian airborne regiment until the evaluation team has made its report to the Secretary General. As the hon. member knows, this regiment has been a standby regiment for peacekeeping for several years.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Not for the activity of being a hewer of wood.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Will the minister advise why the unit at this stage of its combat readiness would be used not as a peacekeeping unit but as a supply unit under the logistic arrangements forecast by the Secretary of State for External Affairs? After all, the RCMP can look after a parking lot as well.

Mr. Richardson: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian airborne regiment is trained to play more than one role. Although it is a combat regiment, it is also trained in peacekeeping operations. It should be the wish of all of us that it play a role in peacekeeping, rather than in combat.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair will recognize the hon. member for Saint John-Lancaster on a supplementary and then the hon. member for York South.

TIME OF DEBATE ON CANADIAN PARTICIPATION IN
MIDDLE EAST PEACEKEEPING FORCE

Mr. Tom Bell (Saint John-Lancaster): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Does the sending of the evaluation team now mean the matter will not be referred to the House in the way indicated until the evaluation report is given to the House?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I would prefer that, but I would have no objection if the House insisted on having an earlier debate. I just suggest it would be a more valuable and productive debate if there could be a clarification of our role before that debate takes place.

● (1430)

Mr. Bell: When is the report expected? This is all involved in the motion under Standing Order 26 which was just put forward.

An hon. Member: They are all mixed up.

Mr. Speaker: While the matter is being pondered, the Chair will recognize the hon. member for York South.

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ENERGY

SUGGESTED MEETING OF FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL
FIRST MINISTERS ON POSSIBLE SHORTAGE OF OIL
SUPPLIES—PRIME MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, before asking my question may I say I cannot agree with the suggestion of the hon. member for Saint John-Lancaster

that the motion under Standing Order 26 moved earlier has a connection with the matter he raised.

I want to pose a question to the Prime Minister. Has he received and, if so, has he had time to study a telegram from Premier Barrett of British Columbia urging an early meeting of the first ministers of Canada for the purpose of co-ordinating plans with respect to the shortage, or possible shortage, of oil supplies, as well as plans for conservation and distribution, so that there might be a co-ordinated Canadian energy policy in this perhaps critical period? If the right hon. gentleman has had time to study the telegram, does he intend to call such a meeting of first ministers?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): I did, indeed, receive such a telegram and I am a little puzzled by it. The subject matter is certainly an urgent one and must be studied. However, I am not sure whether Premier Barrett is aware that such a conference has already been called at the ministerial level and that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has set November 23 as the date. I have not communicated with Premier Barrett on this point, although I did have occasion to talk with him on other matters last week. But on this matter I am not clear whether he wants a meeting of first ministers to supersede this meeting at the ministerial level. If so, my advice would be that it would be preferable to stick to the initiative we have taken of calling a ministerial meeting on November 23 to do all the preliminary work and then, as soon as is necessary thereafter, to call a meeting of first ministers, as was our original plan.

OIL SUPPLIES—POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHMENT OF
NATIONAL CORPORATION TO DEAL DIRECTLY WITH
VENEZUELA

Mr. David Lewis (York South): I would assume that Premier Barrett's suggestion arises from the attitude taken by the premier of the neighbouring province of Alberta. In any case, may I ask the Prime Minister the following question. It is true it has been asked of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, but may I put it to him in this way. In view of reports that there may be some cutback in oil supplies from Venezuela, which could affect Canada, and in view of the attitude taken by the government of Venezuela that it cannot control the distribution of its oil supplies because they are mainly in the hands of Exxon, may I ask the Prime Minister whether the cabinet is coming to a conclusion, or how quickly it may come to a conclusion to set up a national petroleum corporation that would be able to deal directly with the government of Venezuela and ensure some security of oil supplies this winter?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): I am afraid that at this stage I am not able to agree with the assumption with which the hon. member prefaced his first question. I am not in a position to know what the Premier of Alberta will do but I am still operating on the assumption that the Alberta minister responsible for this particular area of policy will be at the meeting on November 23. If he is not, I do not think this should lead us to the conclusion that we cannot meet in the absence of the minister