

Inquiries of the Ministry

REPRESENTATIONS BY PRIME MINISTER TO SOVIET
GOVERNMENT CONCERNING CZECHOSLOVAKIA
AND POSITION OF JEWS IN RUSSIA

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Perhaps the Acting Prime Minister may know the answer to this question or he may have to acquire the information. As the discussions were no doubt frank and fruitful, can the Acting Prime Minister report whether the Prime Minister advised the Kremlin leaders of the objection of the Canadian people to Soviet action in Czechoslovakia? Did the Prime Minister also discuss with the U.S.S.R. the position of the Jewish people in Russia and did this discussion take place before the recent severe sentences imposed on Jewish people who attempted to leave Russia?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I know the Prime Minister had all these matters on his agenda to take up with the Soviet government and I am sure he did. I think, Mr. Speaker, that the arrangements that have been made for regular consultation will enable us to forward our interests more effectively than at any time in the past.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, with respect to one aspect of the question just asked by the hon. member for Peace River, may I ask a supplementary question. In view of the assurance the Secretary of State for External Affairs gave on Monday that the Prime Minister would speak to the Soviet authorities about the trials of Jewish citizens in that country and in view of what has happened since, will the Acting Prime Minister ask the Prime Minister to express the concern of the Canadian people over the decisions handed down yesterday?

Mr. Sharp: Yes, Mr. Speaker, and I will ensure also that the remarks made here in the House of Commons are conveyed directly to the Prime Minister so that the Prime Minister may be aware of the views of hon. members on this subject.

DELIVERY OF GRAIN TO RUSSIA UNDER AGREEMENT—
REPRESENTATIONS BY PRIME MINISTER TO
SOVIET GOVERNMENT

Mr. S. J. Korchinski (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Acting Prime Minister whether the Prime Minister, while in Russia, might not take up the question of the wheat agreement that was signed since the Russian authorities are now several years behind in picking up the grain that they committed themselves to buy?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I thought that was implied in the question of the hon. member for Peace River. These are subjects that the Prime Minister has on his agenda.

REPRESENTATIONS BY PRIME MINISTER TO SOVIET
GOVERNMENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS OF
RUSSIAN CITIZENS

Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Acting Prime Minister whether the Prime Minister, while he is in Russia, will, as requested by the

[Mr. Sharp.]

Ukrainian Canadian Committee, take up the matter of human rights on behalf of individual citizens within the Soviet Union, in particular those of Mr. Moroz and Mr. Karavanskyi, who are now in prison for political and cultural reasons?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, even though the Prime Minister had many hours of discussion with Soviet leaders on a wide variety of subjects, I do not know whether he would be able to press every point that is of interest to the Canadian people. That is why I think, Mr. Speaker, that a very wise decision has been taken by the leaders of our two countries in providing for regular consultations on these kinds of matters.

PURPOSE OF AGREEMENT WITH SOVIET UNION
ON CONSULTATION

Mr. J. P. Nowlan (Annapolis Valley): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Acting Prime Minister. Since the Prime Minister has often expressed the point of view that it is very uncomfortable living next to the American elephant, I wonder if the cultural agreement signed in the last few days and especially the press conference that the Prime Minister is alleged to have held in Moscow last night are a substitute for the American elephant? Will familiarity with the Russian bear be that much more comfortable for us, or is this a positive attempt to extend and supplement Canadian foreign policy and not just a negative step because of our reaction to the American elephant?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that the Prime Minister, in putting forward this proposal for the establishment of regular consultation, is trying to reinforce good relations with both of our great neighbours and, as he himself said, to reinforce an independent foreign policy for Canada.

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PENITENTIARIES

REFUSAL OF PERMISSION TO MEMBERS TO VISIT
COLLINS BAY

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I would have directed my question to the Solicitor General if he had been here today as scheduled, but perhaps I might ask the Acting Prime Minister. My question relates to the statement yesterday by the Solicitor General before the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs that henceforth communications between inmates in federal institutions and the Commissioner of Penitentiaries and between inmates and Members of Parliament would be confidential and no longer be looked at by censors or any of the officials in the institutions, and that the reverse would be true as well. In view of that statement by the Solicitor General to the committee yesterday, would the Acting Prime Minister look into the situation which saw this morning the Commissioner of Penitentiaries overrule the minister and refuse permission to Members of Parlia-