

Inquiries of the Ministry

of this house and the Canadian people generally. In the opinion of this group recent developments in the Middle East are the result of the shortsightedness of United States foreign policy in recent years, commencing with the refusal of the loan to Egypt which could have been the starting point, in the opinion of this group, for a positive and constructive approach to the difficult problems of the Middle East.

In particular we in this group are opposed to bilateral action. We urge that every effort be made that circumstances justify for the utilization of the international police force under the United Nations to restore order and maintain peace in this very difficult area.

COLOMBO PLAN—ALLEGED DELAY IN APPROVAL OF PROJECTS

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Hazen Argue (Assiniboia): I should like to direct a question to the Prime Minister arising out of press reports about continued delays in the approval of projects under the Colombo plan. Would the Prime Minister inform the house what action Canada is taking to accelerate these very important projects and as to the assistance given to underdeveloped countries?

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): The government believes in the Colombo plan, Mr. Speaker, and has given every consideration to the various projects that have been suggested as worthy of support under that plan. There has been no delay. There have been some projects for which relatively small expenditure has been asked, and they have been deferred in so far as approval is concerned.

I may say this, that having regard to the increased amount made available for Colombo plan projects since this government came into power, I am sure the house will agree that there is no justification for any criticism of delay with respect to projects which are worthy of immediate consideration.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT

STATEMENT ON MAIL DELIVERY OF COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA

On the orders of the day:

Hon. W. M. Hamilton (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, on Friday last the Leader of the Opposition made an inquiry of me concerning a newspaper report that a publication, faked by the communists to look exactly like *Ceske Slovo*, a free Czech paper published in Munich, had been received by Czech Canadians. He asked whether there was anything that could be done by the Post

Office Department to stop this "communist propaganda by misrepresentation" from coming through the mail.

The short answer is no, but a brief explanation of the reasons will be helpful, I think. A number of communist countries have a well developed publicity program which is largely based on mailing to selected groups of Canadians various types of news and information sheets giving the communist point of view and attitude on various matters both within and without the iron curtain. With few exceptions this material has not been requested by those who receive it, and in most cases the recipients would much prefer not to be on the mailing list at all.

I have much sympathy with those who find themselves in this position, and most particularly with new citizens of Canada who have come to this country from communist dominated areas in search of freedom and who are sent this material much against their will and sometimes to their great embarrassment; none the less, under the policy which is generally adopted toward our domestic mail and more particularly under those international conventions covering the carriage of mail to which Canada is a subscriber, it is not practical for the Post Office Department to take action in these cases.

The basic principle which is involved is the sanctity of the mails and the fact that in free countries we do not set up either the post office or any other government department as a censor of that material which passes through the mails; nor would it be desirable to do so. By law or for practical reasons of safety certain classes of material are specifically prohibited from passage through the mails. The law includes such items as obscene literature, lottery tickets and the like, while safety and common sense extend to such material as explosives. Beyond this, we accept and deliver everything which is placed in our hands and on which the proper postage has been paid.

In a case such as that referred to by my hon. friend the parties who are concerned, if they are aggrieved, must necessarily look to the proper courts for whatever action is justified and not to the Post Office Department.

It might be helpful to my hon. friend as well if I quoted the remarks he made on August 1, 1956, as found on page 6837 of *Hansard*, when he said:

This is a free country and subject to the observance of the law, people, even diplomats from the Soviet countries, can use the mails for the circulation of their literature.

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, nothing I included in my question was meant by me to transgress the principle the Postmaster General