

Supply—External Affairs

the article and that the deductions from those facts are both unfair and unwarranted. The first question the hon. member asked me is as follows:

Why was Chester Ronning selected as temporary leader to replace the hon. minister of external affairs when he was to be absent from the conference?

The reason is a very obvious one. Mr. Ronning was the senior member of the delegation and would automatically take my place when I left as acting leader. He was the senior member of the delegation because he is a senior official in our department with great knowledge and experience of Far Eastern affairs, and this was a conference dealing with Far Eastern affairs. The second question read:

Is it true that "one of Mr. Ronning's first acts was to seek out Chou En-lai, leader of the red Chinese delegation at Geneva?"

The answer to that question is no, it is not true. Therefore I do not need to deal with questions 3 and 4. The sixth question reads as follows:

Is there any truth to the Canadian Press report from London that "it is possible that there is some connection between the release of the last two Canadian missionaries and the conversations which took place between the Canadian delegation and the red Chinese delegation in Geneva"?

The answer to that question is that an informal discussion did take place in Geneva between a member of our delegation, Mr. Ronning, and a secretary of the Chinese delegation after we had first taken up the matter with the United Kingdom chargé d'affaires at Peking in the hope that by bringing to the attention of this particular Chinese communist official the plight of these Canadian missionaries who were still detained something might be done to bring about their release. It will be recalled that before I went to Geneva I was asked by more than one member of the house, including the Leader of the Opposition, if I would take advantage of any opportunity that might present itself to bring to the attention of the Chinese communist government that there were Canadians under detention and do what I could to secure their release.

It was in view of that advice, which was good advice, and I hope I would have undertaken it in any event, that we got in touch with a member of the Chinese communist delegation after ascertaining first through the representative of a state which had recognized the government of which this particular person was an official and not a delegate that this particular official would talk to our representative. It may be that the result of

those talks is one of the reasons why certain releases of Canadian missionaries in China have taken place in the last few days.

Mr. MacInnis: May I ask the minister a question on that point? Does the article, which I have not seen, conclude that it was wrong for the—

Mr. Pearson: I will come to that point because one of the subsequent questions deals with it. The seventh question reads as follows:

Did the minister of external affairs speak to Mr. Trevelyan of the British foreign office last month about this matter?

Mr. Trevelyan is the United Kingdom chargé d'affaires in Peking, and no doubt the reason that question has been asked is that a Canadian Press dispatch which was quoted in the *Ensign* article is said to suggest that Canadian recognition of red China was under discussion and that for that reason I may have spoken to Mr. Trevelyan and tried to link the two things. I can assure my hon. friend I did speak to Mr. Trevelyan, the United Kingdom chargé d'affaires. I was very happy indeed to meet and discuss conditions in China with him and to thank him for all that he has done as United Kingdom chargé d'affaires to protect the interests of Canadians in China during these difficult months because it was through him and only through him at that time that we had access to the Chinese authorities after we withdrew our own representatives.

But it is quite untrue to suggest that I was using Mr. Trevelyan as a liaison officer or in any such capacity to bring up the possibility of even discussing the recognition of red China. I talked to him solely about what he had done for Canadians and expressed the hope that possibly at Geneva we might be able to get in touch through him with some Chinese official in the hope that we might secure the release of the remaining six Canadians who are under detention in China. I should like to think that possibly we have had some success in that matter. The eighth question is as follows:

Is it true that the two Canadian missionaries, Reverend Beauregard and Reverend Venadam, had already been freed by orders issued many weeks ago, and arrived at Hong Kong in the middle of May?

I am not sure of that. It may well have been, and I am not suggesting that because we did have these talks with a Chinese official through one of our officials that that could have in any way been responsible for the release of Canadian missionaries who arrived in Hong Kong before the conference opened. The ninth question also deals with