

Inquiries of the Ministry

Canadian government to ensure the development of the Canadian economy, and the minister replied that that was one of their concerns, but not their primary concern. This gave me cause for grave misgivings.

I hope that at some time we shall be told specifically what was agreed on between the Canadian government members and their United States counterparts.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**MIDDLE EAST—POSSIBLE ACCEPTANCE BY CANADA OF ARAB REFUGEES**

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Michael Starr (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Prime Minister. Is there any authenticity to the report which appeared in the *Globe and Mail* this morning that Canada has agreed to accept 40,000 Arab refugees? If this report is correct can the Prime Minister enlarge on the matter. Can he tell us whether Canada will bear the full cost of this humanitarian action.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. As the hon. member knows, he cannot ask about the accuracy of a press statement. He can ask a question directly. I am sure we can assume that the question has been asked directly.

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think I may be permitted to assume that the question was asked of me directly. I must answer it by saying that there is no foundation to the report on which this question was based.

Mr. Starr: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Should the government feel motivated to take action such as this will the Prime Minister assure us that first, before any decision is made, the matter will be brought before the House of Commons for its deliberation?

Mr. Pearson: Certainly, Mr. Speaker, the house will have an opportunity to discuss an important matter of this kind. I do not wish to give the impression that any decision on this matter of taking refugees is imminent. For one thing, the Arab states take a very unfavourable view toward other countries receiving refugees from that area, at this time. The matter must be arranged not only in co-operation with the government of Israel, where the refugees—or where a lot of them at least—are at the present time, but with the governments of the Arab states themselves.

[Mr. Cameron (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands).]

The response of Arab refugees outside that area can only be one factor in dealing with the refugee problem. But there is no likelihood of a decision being made immediately with regard to this matter; it will require a great deal of negotiation on an international basis.

Mr. Starr: Would the government give an assurance that no decision will be made before the subject has been debated in the House of Commons?

Mr. Pearson: If the House of Commons were not sitting, and agreement was reached between all concerned that this would be an important step in dealing with the refugee problem, I am sure the hon. member would wish us to play our part. But I can assure him that if the house is sitting no decision would be reached until hon. members had been consulted.

Mr. W. B. Nesbitt (Oxford): Did I hear the Prime Minister correctly as saying that the governments of the Arab states will be consulted before any Arab refugees who are at present under the jurisdiction of Israel could come to Canada? Do not the people themselves have some say in the matter?

Mr. Pearson: Yes, but if refugees are in Arab territory, surely it is normal for the Arab states to be consulted and many of these refugees are there at the present time.

Mr. Nesbitt: Would the government give consideration to means of making sure that any refugees of this nature who might come to Canada would be given adequate training immediately after their arrival, so that they would not face unemployment?

Mr. Pearson: Of course, if as part of an international plan we agreed to accept a quota of refugees of this kind we would have to take the responsibility for making it possible for them to take their places in Canadian society. This would require training in a great many cases.

EXTERNAL AID**MIDDLE EAST—FURTHER CONTRIBUTION TO UNRWA**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. David Lewis (York South): I have a related question for the Prime Minister. In view of the serious plight of refugees in the middle east and the announcement in the United Nations general assembly a couple of days ago that the United Kingdom has made an additional contribution of, if I remember