

Inquiries of the Ministry

TRANSPORT

the tragic South African situation because of his desire to be in a position to mediate at the forthcoming prime ministers' conference in London?

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I will make no attempt to comment on a press report but, in saying that, I would not go as far as the statement in question implies according to the reading thereof by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs, in the light of what the Prime Minister has said, whether he is now willing to revise the statement he made in the house on February 16, as reported at page 1139 of *Hansard* of that date:

Today it would be extremely hard to find two nations between which Canada could be a go-between.

Mr. Speaker: I think the Leader of the Opposition will appreciate that that is not an appropriate contribution to the proceedings at this stage because it is an argumentative question.

Hon. Paul Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Prime Minister a supplementary question in view of the reply which he has just given to the Leader of the Opposition on the question of apartheid in South Africa. Will the Prime Minister now revise the statement he made in this house in reply to a question I put to him earlier in the session to the effect that he would not initiate any discussion of this matter at the prime ministers' conference?

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman knows that what takes place at the prime ministers' conference is secret. I am glad to notice the tremendous interest of the hon. gentleman in apartheid because I seem to recall that on a number of occasions when he was one of the representatives at the United Nations in New York and the vote took place on the South African question, he led in Canada's position about taking no attitude and having no vote thereon.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, may I thank the Prime Minister for this historical narrative and ask him if he proposes to initiate a discussion of this important matter at the prime ministers' conference?

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I expected that question to be asked and therefore in order to make sure that the historical record is correct I would remind the hon. gentleman that if he will look at the answer given by the former prime minister, the Right. Hon. Louis St. Laurent, on June 22, 1956, with regard to prime ministers' conferences, he will find a complete answer to his question.

WALPOLE ISLAND—REPORTED INADEQUATE SUPPLIES OF FOOD AND FUEL

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Lionel Chevrier (Laurier): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Minister of Transport and ask him if he has seen a statement in this morning's *Globe and Mail* which reports that food and fuel supplies were reported yesterday to be running low on Walpole island in the St. Clair river and that the island residents are attempting to obtain a United States coastguard cutter to break through the icebound channel? What has happened, may I ask the minister, to the usually efficient services of the Department of Transport?

Hon. George H. Hees (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I would say that the usually efficient services of the Department of Transport are as efficient as usual. I have heard no complaint in this particular regard. As always happens when we do hear complaints or receive requests for service we supply them as quickly and efficiently as is reasonably possible.

Mr. Chevrier: I am bringing this to the attention of the minister now. Is the minister going to take cognizance of this and bring assistance to these islanders?

Mr. Hees: I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that the islanders do not need the assistance of the hon. member for Laurier. If they want assistance from this government I am sure they will ask for it. If they ask for it, every consideration will be given, as always, to requests of this kind.

Mr. Chevrier: May I ask a supplementary question? Why, then, is the United States coastguard service going to the assistance of those people rather than the Canadian service?

Mr. Hees: Perhaps because they have a cutter in the immediate vicinity. I would say that would be the logical answer.

ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE

MOUNT HOPE, ONT.—INQUIRY AS TO CLOSING OF STATION

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Paul Hellyer (Trinity): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct another question to the Minister of National Defence. Does his department contemplate an early closing of the R.C.A.F. station at Mount Hope?