

Oral Questions

today, perhaps later this week, or at some time, in any event, by mutual agreement. I will therefore hold the matter in abeyance. Following discussions after the calling of orders of the day, a statement can be made from the Chair indicating the decision which has been reached.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

PRESENT POSITION RESPECTING CANADIAN PARTICIPATION IN MIDDLE EAST PEACEKEEPING FORCE

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to divert a question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs about his visit to the United Nations and the documents he tabled today. Is the government of Canada now formally committed to sending a contingent, as originally proposed, to provide logistics support for the United Nations Emergency Force, or is the government simply committed to sending what is described, I think, as a small evaluation force to the area?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the situation, if I may describe it briefly, is this: The Secretary General asked Canada originally to supply the logistics component of the United Nations Emergency Force. It was because of some doubt whether this proposition was wholly acceptable to all members of the Security Council and the parties to the conflict that I went to New York on Friday to discuss with the Secretary General later developments. At that time, or shortly after I arrived, the Security Council held another meeting and put forward the—

Mr. Stanfield: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. With respect, it seems to me the minister is making the kind of statement that he ought to make on motions. We are very grateful for the information, but I suggest that we would be prepared to revert to motions so the minister can make the statement.

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, I do not think it would be wise at this time to make an extensive statement on the subject; I will be quite happy to answer the hon. gentleman's question more briefly. All we are committed to at the moment, although we have accepted the larger role, is to send an evaluation force to the Middle East in order to determine what our role should be.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, can the Secretary of State for External Affairs explain, and I am not being facetious, what he means by saying that the government of Canada is committed to the larger role but the only thing it has agreed to do is to send a small evaluation team?

Mr. Sharp: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The House will recall that I said, in reply to a question, that until the situation is clarified we do not intend to send any other troops to the Middle East. All that we have agreed to send so far is a small evaluation team.

[Mr. Speaker.]

POSITION OF ARAB COUNTRIES ON SUPPLYING OF OIL TO CANADA

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister indicated on Friday, I believe, that the Secretary of State for External Affairs would be consulting with the representatives of the Arab oil producing nations at the United Nations with regard to security of oil supplies for Canada. Can the minister advise the House whether, in his meetings with the representatives of the Arab states, he discussed any conditions and received any assurance with regard to an assured supply of petroleum to Canada from the Arab oil producing countries in the event of Canada participating in the United Nations Emergency Force?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is any direct relationship between our participation in the United Nations Emergency Force and the attitude of the Arab oil states toward supplying oil to Canada. The discussions that I and our ambassadors have had directly with the representatives of the Arab countries indicate that Canada is not considered to be a country unfriendly to the Arab countries and we have no information that any boycott will be applied against us. As the hon. gentleman knows, the oil countries are reducing their production. It is very difficult for anyone to tell how that will affect deliveries to any country in the world.

OPPORTUNITY FOR DEBATE ON CANADIAN PARTICIPATION IN MIDDLE EAST PEACEKEEPING FORCE

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, will the minister say whether the commitment he made last week that the approval of parliament will be sought with regard to sending a force in reply to the Secretary General's request still stands and when we may expect that debate?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the commitment still stands. I am ready to call the item immediately, but I believe it would be very much in the interests of the House before the resolution is called that the exact role that Canada will be called upon to play be decided. We now have to consider sharing the logistics component with at least one other country, namely, Poland. It is for this reason that the evaluation team is going to Cairo to try to determine how best to divide these responsibilities.

REASON FOR ALLOCATING AIRBORNE UNIT FOR POSSIBLE SERVICE IN MIDDLE EAST PEACEKEEPING FORCE

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for either the Secretary of State for External Affairs or the Minister of National Defence. In view of the fact an evaluation team is now going to Cairo and there has been a review of the role Canada will play, why was it decided to choose the Canadian airborne regiment, Canada's combat alert unit, to fulfil this role which would normally be carried out by a supply unit?