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that government members of the house do their best work, not on the floor of the house, but, consulting with the cabinet before they ever come into the house. I would ask what success the minister is having with the western Liberals, what suggestions he is getting from them, and what assistance in framing the wheat legislation and carrying out the recommendations of the pool delegation?

Hon. J. A. MacKINNON (Minister of Trade and Commerce): In reply to the first question asked by the hon. member for Qu'Appelle, I wish to say that those advising the cabinet on matters of wheat and farm policy, and those members of the cabinet who are particularly responsible for policy along that line, and the cabinet generally, have been holding practically continuous meetings on this question for a long time. In the last few days, for instance, we spent all Saturday afternoon, Sunday afternoon, Monday and last night until twelve o'clock, considering this subject and endeavouring to arrive at unanimity on a question of such great importance to western Canada and Canada at large. Most sympathetic and anxious attention is being given to the problem, and I can assure the hon. member that a decision will be brought down at the earliest possible moment.

I do not think the hon. member really expects an answer to his second question.

Mr. PERLEY: I think it would be very interesting to have one.

STANDING ORDERS

ENFORCEMENT OF RULE WITH RESPECT TO READING OF SPEECHES

On the orders of the day:

Mr. J. K. BLAIR (Wellington North): Now that the speech from the throne is disposed of, I would like to ask you, Mr. Speaker, if the rule that prohibits members from reading their speeches will be enforced from now until the end of the session?

Mr. SPEAKER: The rules of the house are there and will have to be enforced.

HONG KONG

STATEMENT WITH RESPECT TO CANADIAN CASUALTIES

On the orders of the day:

Hon. J. L. RALSTON (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, to-day the government has received the first official information from which any definite conclusion can be arrived at with respect to the number of casualties at Hong Kong. A message has been received from the Canadian Minister at Buenos Aires

(Mr. Perley.)

transmitting a message which was received from the Argentine embassy—I take it to be the Argentine embassy at Tokyo. The message is very meagre. It gives figures, and that is all. The statement is that "Japanese government officially communicate figures for prisoners of war Hong Kong, Canadians, 1,689." Hon. members will remember that the number who embarked was 1,985. That means, on the basis of those figures, I most sincerely regret to say, that, at least without further information, 296 would be regarded as either dead or missing.

SUGAR

INQUIRY AS TO RATIONING AND CONSERVATION OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE

On the orders of the day:

Mr. J. S. ROY (Gaspé): Will the Minister of Finance inform the house whether the government's policy with respect to the conservation of foreign exchange has anything to do with the rationing of sugar?

Hon. J. L. ILSLEY (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the reason for the rationing of sugar was the action taken by the United States and the fact that there was a possible prospective shortage of sugar. It had no relation whatever to the conservation of exchange.

PLEBISCITE ACT

PROVISION FOR TAKING OF VOTES ON ANY QUESTION SUBMITTED BY WAY OF PLEBISCITE

Hon. N. A. McLARTY (Secretary of State) moved the second reading of Bill No. 10, respecting the taking of a plebiscite in every electoral district in Canada and the taking of the votes of such plebiscite of Canadian service voters stationed within and without Canada.

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): The bill which is now before the house for its second reading is, as the Secretary of State (Mr. McLarty), who introduced it, announced a few days ago, in the nature of a general plebiscite act; that is to say, it makes provision for the taking of a plebiscite which ordinarily would be as applicable to a plebiscite on one subject as another. The intention, however, is that the bill should be for one plebiscite only, and that the plebiscite when taken, shall have reference to only one question. That question has already been made clear to the members of the house and the public, but I will take occasion at once to bring again to the attention of the house its exact wording.