

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, I remember that question very well. I had inquiries made. Unfortunately, the cabinet ministers of this government do not have a surfeit of directorships in outside companies.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I rise on a further point of order. That does not excuse cabinet ministers from responding to an order of the House that a full return be tabled.

● (1520)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

ARAB-ISRAELI WAR—REQUEST FOR REPORT—POSITION OF CANADA—POSSIBLE PARTICIPATION IN PEACEKEEPING

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Can the hon. gentleman report any progress with respect to coming closer to the end of the terrible war that is taking place in the Middle East, and will he tell us precisely what is the attitude of the Canadian government toward this tragic conflict?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): During the parliamentary recess, when this bloody war began, I did make some public statements and it would be my intention, either tomorrow or the next day, to make a statement on motions setting out the facts as we know them and the attitude of the Canadian government.

Mr. Stanfield: Will the minister tell the House whether the statement he made to the effect that Canada would agree to participate in a new peacekeeping force is formal government policy, and whether the government has committed itself or is prepared to send forces immediately upon a request by the United Nations?

Mr. Sharp: As the Leader of the Opposition knows, we do have some Canadian forces in the area today serving with the United Nations Truce Supervisory Organization. They are continuing to serve in that capacity although, as the hon. gentleman knows, the truce is no longer being observed. I said in the House, and I repeated it in New York, that Canada would be prepared to participate in peacekeeping operations under the auspices of the United Nations. That caveat about United Nations sponsorship does, of course, apply to any request that might be made to us to serve in this area again.

Mr. Stanfield: I should like to ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs whether he has taken any initiative on behalf of Canada to bring hostilities in the area to an end?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, I would not wish, of course, to exaggerate the importance of what Canada might say or do in these circumstances. This is not a war which is going

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to be ended by simple requests from a country like Canada to stop the fighting. We have, however, done everything we can to make known Canada's view that this kind of warfare is not likely to settle anything and that there must be negotiations. We have expressed this point of view to all those participating in the war at the present time. We have instructed our ambassadors to present this view to the governments of all countries concerned and there has been some response—so far, not very hopeful.

ARAB-ISRAELI WAR—POSSIBILITY OF DEBATE—RIGHT OF ISRAEL TO EXIST AND HAVE SECURE BOUNDARIES

Mr. David Lewis (York South): On the same subject, may I ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs whether he would be prepared to agree to a debate on this issue in the House, not necessarily a lengthy one but comprising more than the usual statement by him followed by responses on the part of the spokesmen for the other parties?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Subject, of course, to the agreement of the House leaders on the business of the House, I, personally—and I know the government shares this view—would have no objection to a debate of that kind if it could be arranged at a time when it did not interfere with vital business going on in the House.

Mr. Lewis: Basic to the entire problem in the Middle East, as the Secretary of State for External Affairs knows, is the question of the right of Israel to continue its existence as a sovereign country in that area. May I ask the minister whether, in any statement he may make, he will continue to emphasize Canada's support of the right of Israel to exist and to have secure and recognized boundaries?

Mr. Sharp: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I can entirely agree with what the leader of the New Democratic Party has said. Canada's policy begins from the premise that the State of Israel, which we helped to bring into existence and whose membership in the United Nations we supported, has the right to exist just like any other state in the world.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Sharp: We also believe it is entitled to live behind secure and recognized boundaries.

ARAB-ISRAELI WAR—GOVERNMENT POSITION ON WHETHER OR NOT ARABS GUILTY OF AGGRESSION

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, my question is more direct than those which have been asked so far.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Diefenbaker: Oh, no, those questions were very proper.

An hon. Member: But inept?