

Inquiries of the Ministry
POST OFFICE

REOPENING OF CERTAIN POST OFFICES

Mr. Craig Stewart (Marquette): I should like to direct my question to the minister responsible for the Post Office. Having regard to the large number of complaints about rural route mail service in areas where post offices were closed in the last year, will the minister reopen such post offices when requested to do so by a large majority of the residents concerned?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Côté (Minister without Portfolio): I would have to consider exactly what is meant by that question. I have received many requests to reopen post offices. My immediate answer would be that we do not intend to reopen post offices. Nevertheless, we will look at cases where people are suffering hardship because of the loss of post offices in circumstances in which an alternative service is not in fact replacing the post office.

Mr. Stewart (Marquette): At the time these post offices were closed the department said it was on a one year trial basis. In these circumstances, would the minister not reconsider his decision?

Mr. Côté (Longueuil): I do not remember that, Mr. Speaker.

* * *

FISHERIES

**PREVENTION OF FISHING BY FOREIGN DRAGGERS
INSIDE 12-MILE LIMIT**

Mr. John Lundrigan (Gander-Twillingate): I have a question for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Can the minister say that as of today the fishing nations which have had traditional rights within the 12-mile zone mentioned by the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry are not permitted to fish inside that 12-mile limit?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): The statement made by the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry speaks for itself. I think it was clear on that point. If it was not, perhaps I can take a look at this particular question, but I believe it was answered by the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry in his statement this morning.

Mr. Lundrigan: Surely to goodness, the minister can tell us whether these countries can fish inside the zone. After all, he is the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Having looked over the minister's statement, if indeed he has seen it, can he tell us whether Canada is prepared to take unilateral action to enforce the law and to exact penalties if it is broken?

Mr. Sharp: I can only make the reply which the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry himself made, which is that action of that kind might not further the over-all interests of Canada or, indeed, of the fishermen of Newfoundland.

[Mr. Thomson.]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

REPLACEMENT FOR ARGUS MARITIME PATROL AIRCRAFT

Mr. Doug Rowland (Selkirk): I wish to address a question to the Minister of National Defence. In connection with the negotiations going on with various companies concerning a replacement for the Argus maritime patrol aircraft, I should like to ask the hon. gentleman whether the interesting offer from the Boeing Aircraft Company of which he spoke yesterday consists of delivering Boeing air frames for modification in Canadian aircraft plants?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of National Defence): I should point out that Boeing has made no offer as such. What we have received amounts, really, to a proposal concerning a method by which the 707 aircraft might be adapted for use as a long-range maritime patrol aircraft.

Mr. Rowland: Is it any part of such a proposal that this adaptation should take place in Canadian aircraft plants?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): The preliminary question to be decided is whether this aircraft, which was constructed primarily as a long-range transport, can be modified so as to possess the hover-on-site capability possessed by the Argus. We would have to solve the technical questions involved in the use of the aircraft in this role before we could get down to any specifics as to construction.

* * *

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

INQUIRY TO DISBANDING OF COMMONWEALTH COMMITTEE ON INDIAN OCEAN SECURITY

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): I wish to address a question to the Acting Prime Minister. It concerns what might be called the still-born child of the Singapore conference, the standing committee on security in the Indian Ocean. Bearing in mind the growing number of resignations from this group, can the minister advise us whether a decision has been made by the remaining members to hold a meeting? Will the committee be disbanded, or is Canada waiting until all the other members drop out?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I should like to say to the hon. member that we have no intention of taking any initiative to drop out of the committee. We considered that it was a useful initiative, and we still think so. However, I am satisfied that the committee will not meet. Too many countries have now indicated their intention to drop out of this committee, and a meeting would not be in accordance with the purposes of the Singapore conference.