

Inquiries of the Ministry

could equally well be made by the Leader of the Opposition or by the leader of the New Democratic party. This will be, as I say, a moral decision taken by friendly nations. But debate is going on in the United States, and if their policy is to remain or is to be changed, that decision will come about as a consequence of what is happening in the United States debate and not as a consequence of statements made in this house.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. It seems to me that this has become debate. This is still the question period and there are a number of hon. members who are anxious to ask questions. They have been rising dutifully for the last half hour and I am anxious to give them the opportunity to ask their questions.

Mr. Stanfield: A further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. If the government of Canada were to express an opinion and moral judgment to a friendly nation, is it not more likely that the public officers of that friendly nation would consider more seriously Canada's representations if they were made at an early date before Congress has become involved too seriously in the debate or before a decision is reached?

Mr. Trudeau: Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, could speak out strongly and state his position on this matter. We should like to know what it is, because it might guide us in the establishment of the government's position.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, may I remind the Prime Minister that it was he who suggested that the government of Canada had a moral obligation to express its view on this matter, after having assessed the situation. He said that it would do so.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. Since Canada will certainly be affected by any decision reached with respect to the construction of the A.B.M. safeguard system, have any representations been made by the government of Canada to the government of the United States? Are any discussions going on at any level between the two governments regarding this A.B.M. system?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the point I am trying to make is that Canada will be affected, but the whole world also will be affected. If the Canadian government had power to

make decisions in this area I think we would suggest that the A.B.M. system should not be proceeded with. But we should also have to make a decision to see that the Soviets do not escalate their arms, and to see that they do not build an A.B.M. system around Moscow. But our writ does not extend to the United States or the Soviet Union. Really, the house is asking me to state a moral position. Our position is that the government hopes that no escalation will be embarked upon by either side.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I was not asking the Prime Minister at the moment to pass any moral judgment. I am asking him a simple question. Have any representations been made by the government of Canada to the government of the United States and are any discussions going on between the two governments at any level?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I think my answer indicated that the input—if that is the term—into such representations at this stage would be very vague and only of a moralistic nature. Therefore the implications of my statement are that there are no such discussions going on at the present time. When I went to the United States there were exchanges between the President and myself and between some of their officials and ministers and ourselves. We entered into those exchanges in order to gain more knowledge of their case for having an A.B.M. system. We heard this case. Their case rests on their belief that they are not escalating arms; they are trying to respond to an A.B.M. system already built in the Soviet Union. They say they are not trying to embark on nuclear escalation, that that was started by the Soviet Union.

I think each country will have to state what its moral position on this question is. I have stated our position. Once again, I do not think that this will help to solve the debate going on in the United States. It will not help if a prime minister of Canada says to the United States what he thinks they should be doing. There are two sides to this debate in the United States and those two sides are carrying on the debate very vigorously and strongly.