

Inquiries of the Ministry

country by communist China and its military forces over the week end, will the government give an assurance that it will refrain from cutting aid to India under the Colombo plan during the coming year and that, during the period of hostilities, it will suspend shipments of Canadian grain to communist China and divert them instead to India?

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we in Canada at all times have been ready and willing to supply wheat to India when we have had a surplus. At no time has India expressed any desire to obtain any more wheat than she has been receiving. Indeed, the information that was given to me when I was in India was that so far as it was possible it was hoped that any assistance provided under the Colombo plan would be by way of those things that would permit of capital projects being proceeded with.

We still have an ample amount of wheat, and any time India requires wheat we will be in a position to supply it. That fact, however, should not induce us to break an existing contract with another country. To date the relationship between communist China and India is that of a continuation of a boundary dispute, and I am sure the hon. gentleman would be the last to ask the Canadian people to break an existing contract.

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Herridge: Mr. Speaker, may I put an original question supplementary to the last question raised, for clarification purposes?

Mr. Speaker: Is the question being raised by the hon. member for Red Deer a supplementary question?

Mr. Thompson: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Herridge: Mine is for clarification.

Mr. Speaker: For clarification purposes, and then I will see the hon. member for Red Deer.

Mr. H. W. Herridge (Kootenay West): In view of Canadian Press reports that an Indian air force mission is on its way to Canada to explore the possibility of acquiring Caribou transport planes, and in view of the grave news of the attacks by China on India, would the Prime Minister inform the house whether any assistance has been requested by India?

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I may say there has been no official approach by the Indian government to the Canadian government for the purchase of any aircraft or other military equipment. As hon. members know, Canada has no formal commitments to India in the military field. However that does not

deny us deploring the attacks that are being made against India at this time; and if the Indian government should approach us, in view of its situation and the fact that India is a fellow member of the commonwealth, we would certainly give such a request the fullest consideration.

Mr. Thompson: As a supplementary question—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for York North.

Mr. John Addison (York North): I wish to direct a question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Can the minister inform the house whether Canada will support any move for United Nations action with respect to the fighting now in progress between China and India?

Hon. Howard C. Green (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it would be premature for me to make any statement in reply to that question.

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I desire to ask my supplementary question.

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry.

Mr. Thompson: May I ask the Prime Minister, in view of the full scale military operations by the military forces of communist China against India, is the government contemplating taking a different stand than it has taken on the sale of wheat to China, taking into account these developments?

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I think I made it very clear. I know, on the basis of what I read in the newspapers, that the hon. gentleman has strong feelings regarding the sale of wheat to China. However, there has been nothing in the nature of full scale, all out military operations as yet.

[Later:]

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition): May I ask the Prime Minister whether, on the basis of the information which is available to the government alone, the government considers that an act of aggression has been committed against India.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Well, Mr. Speaker, naturally the viewpoint expressed by the Indian government is that there has been not only an act of aggression but a series of acts of aggression. Our relations and our experience with India in the past have shown that that country does place the true and appropriate facts before us.

[Mr. Thompson.]