

Inquiries of the Ministry

[Translation]

Mr. Pelletier: Neither, Mr. Speaker. When I mentioned that I had called for a report on whatever changes were made within the National Film Board, I had not yet received the Commissioner's suggestion that an independent person be appointed to review the appropriateness of the administrative decisions the Board has had to make within the last few days. The hon. member for Annapolis Valley should therefore consider that such an appointment which, by the way, will be made today, is in addition to and not instead of the study of all other administrative matters, including distribution of films.

Before resuming my seat, Mr. Speaker, I wish to state that the minister, as much as possible, avoids interfering personally in internal and administrative decisions of the National Film Board.

[English]

ORDER LEVYING CHARGES FOR USE OF FILMS

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that film distributors and libraries in British Columbia have already been notified that the imposition of fees on films that were formerly free will commence on January 1, may I ask the minister if he would consider withholding this action until he has reconsidered the whole matter? If the minister leaves the matter in abeyance, these fees will come into effect before this reconsideration is completed.

Mr. Stanfield: It is all a question of logic.

[Translation]

Hon. Gérard Pelletier (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, I do not think that we have here a question requiring months of studies, for the situation is very simple. The Board, which like many other government agencies has seen its budget frozen, is trying to recoup as much as possible the cost of its services. Rental fees which it intends to charge henceforth for the loan of films are part of that policy. At the suggestion of the House, I agreed to discuss the matter with the Commissioner, and the discussions are already underway. They should not last too long, and were it necessary to take action, there would be ample time left to do so before July, but I will refrain from giving any assurance that such action will take place.

[Mr. Nowlan.]

[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

BIAFRA—UN INITIATIVE TO END WAR

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. In view of the findings of Norwegian scientists that the two and a half years of war in Biafra have resulted in the death of 40 per cent of the children there between the ages of two and four, will the Canadian government urge upon the United Nations the need for its initiative now to end this war and the wholesale slaughter of defenceless children?

Mr. Fairweather: It is an internal matter, and they can do nothing about it.

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): I have said on many occasions that to raise the matter in the United Nations, according to the advice we have received from the Secretary General, would not help to end the war; it would simply exacerbate the situation.

Mr. Fairweather: Merry Christmas.

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): May I ask the minister whether he could now let us know how the other initiative in Ethiopia is progressing?

Mr. Sharp: Not very well, unfortunately, and I am sure everyone regrets this. As I understand the situation, the Biafran delegation has now withdrawn.

BIAFRA—REQUEST BY CANAIRELIEF FOR ASSISTANCE

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, I have a question with regard to recent proposals under consideration by this government concerning relief and the recent promise to give a decision, particularly to Canairelief, before Christmas. Considering that presumably this is the last day when the minister will be in the House before the end of this part of the session, can he now give us some indication of whether the government has taken a decision and whether such a decision has been communicated to Canairelief?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Not yet, Mr. Speaker. The representative of the Prime Minister, when he was in Lagos, put forward a plan which we believe would be more effective in increasing