Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Diefenbaker: Then I ask the minister whether there is any foundation for the suggestion made in an article by Knowlton Nash, who is usually very reputable, to the effect that the United States administration is seriously considering restrictions on spending by U.S. tourists.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Leader of the Opposition knows that he cannot ask a member of the cabinet to comment on the accuracy of press reports.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Then, Mr. Speaker, I simply ask this. Is the minister in a position to say that under no circumstances has he in the last week had any communication with the United States government in this regard?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, I thought I had made it quite clear that I have not had any such communications. Suggestions of this kind about further restrictions have been floated from time to time in the United States. We have not been informed officially of any; therefore I cannot accept the premise that the United States government intends to do these things. I cannot read the minds of the members of the United States administration any more than I can read the mind of the right hon. Leader of the Opposition, but I have not had any direct communications of this kind.

Mr. Diefenbaker: May I suggest to the minister that it is not a question of mind reading but a question of a government that does not stand up—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Donald MacInnis (Cape Breton South): A supplementary question. The minister referred to suggestions and communications, and I am wondering whether he could explain the difference between the two.

Mr. Sharp: Yes. There are many occasions when reports appear in the newspapers which do not represent the official opinion of the United States government or even the Canadian government. I want to say to my right hon. friend that there have been no official communications about this matter with the Canadian government so far as I am aware. If there had been I can assure him that there would be very strong protests from the Canadian government; but since there have been no communications of this kind I think it would be quite premature for the Canadian government to go out and cry from the housetops before the United States government takes action the Canadian government will protest.

Hon. J. W. Monteith (Perth): A further supplementary question. I would like to ask the Minister of Finance whether there has been any indication by the United States that they will tighten any of the present restrictions or resort to any supplementary measures in this respect. I do not mean in respect to travel funds alone, I am talking of the outflow of funds from the United States.

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, I have had no approaches from the United States government to consider the effect of any purported United States action, which would be the only basis on which I could answer to the house. The hon. gentlemen can read in the papers, as I can, reports about what the United States government may do. I cannot answer questions about these reports; I can only answer questions put to me as to whether the United States government has communicated with the Canadian government, and it has not.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

VIET NAM—EFFORTS TO INITIATE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

On the orders of the day:

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address a question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Could the minister inform the house whether Mr. Chester Ronning and/or anyone else is now in Viet Nam, or has been there within the last week or two, continuing the search for ways of using the international control commission for the purpose of initiating peace negotiations in that unhappy country?

Hon. Paul Martin (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, all I can say is that Mr. Chester Ronning is not in Asia. He was here last week.

[*Translation*]

FIRES

MONTREAL—REQUEST FOR REPORT ON INVESTIGATION

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Réal Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Transport I shall put my question to the Prime Minister.