

Inquiries of the Ministry

External Affairs. Has the Canadian ambassador in Washington reported on the subject of the United States army's intention to ship five barges of nerve gas from Okinawa to Hermiton army base in the state of Washington via the Strait of Juan de Fuca? Furthermore, can the hon. gentleman inform the House what message the Canadian ambassador in Washington delivered to the United States authorities on this subject?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Yes, Mr. Speaker. I have received a report from our ambassador in Washington on this subject. I am informed by him that no shipments have yet taken place. We are pursuing discussions with the United States. The shipments cannot take place until the Secretary for Health, Education and Welfare has reviewed the proposal, including measures to protect public health and safety, and this he has not yet done.

Mr. Anderson: A supplementary question—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would allow the hon. member's supplementary but we are running short of time and I think we ought to move on as quickly as we can.

Mr. Anderson: Can the Secretary of State for External Affairs let the House know the message which was delivered by the Canadian ambassador to the United States authorities?

Mr. Sharp: The ambassador made inquiries, as I have indicated, as to whether in fact these shipments had been made or were being made. I have given the information I have received, namely, that they have not yet been made.

AGRICULTURE

PROGRAM TO MOVE FARMERS OFF LAND

Mr. R. R. Southam (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): My question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture. In light of statements made by the minister in a recent public address, when does the government plan to bring forward its program to speed up the transition of marginal farmers to the city or to retirement with dignity?

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of Agriculture): As I have said many times during the course of this session, Mr. Speaker, I hope it will be before the end of the session.

[Mr. Anderson.]

INDIAN AFFAIRS

TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY—ASSURANCE OF RIGHT TO ENGLISH OR FRENCH EDUCATION

Mr. Robert Simpson (Churchill): I have a question for the Secretary of State, Mr. Speaker. Having regard to the frustration experienced by Eskimos in Northern Quebec who wish to have their children educated in the English language, and in view of the government's declared policy of promoting the equality of both the English and the French languages across Canada, will the Secretary of State inform the House what steps he has taken to ensure that any transfer of responsibility for Canada's Indian people from the federal government to the provinces will not be undertaken in the absence of guarantees to the Indians that they may have their children educated in either the English or the French language?

Mr. Speaker: I suggest to the hon. member and to the minister that this is information which ought to be given to the House by way of a statement.

[Translation]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

INVITATION FROM MAURITANIA TO ATTEND CONFERENCE OF FRENCH-SPEAKING MINISTERS OF EDUCATION

Mr. Georges Valade (Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

Could he tell us whether an agreement has been reached between the federal government and that of Quebec with regard to representation at the conference in Mauritania?

[English]

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): No, Mr. Speaker. We have been taking part in some discussions with the province of Quebec on representation at a number of these conferences both in Niger and in Mauritania. These have not yet been concluded but I judge from the statement attributed to the Premier of Quebec that a decision will be made along the general lines of the agreement reached in the past.

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS

EASTERN NOVA SCOTIA—REPORTED DRASTIC CUTS IN MAINTENANCE OF WAY EMPLOYEES

Mr. H. Russell MacEwan (Central Nova): I have a question for the Minister of Transport,