

Oral Questions

Cong troops were manhandled, and the attempts were made to force them to sign confessions that they were foreign spies, has the government of Canada launched a formal protest to the Viet Cong concerning the treatment of the Canadians held by the Viet Cong?

• (1440)

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the attitude of Canada towards the imprisonment and detention of these two men was known from the beginning. We protested their detention. We took every measure we could to get them released. I am very happy, as I am sure all hon. members are that they have been released in good health. Whether we make formal protests is a rather different matter since the Viet Cong are not recognized by us as a government, but we are members of the international control commission and in our future dealings with them we will bear this in mind.

VIET NAM—ALLEGED FAILURE TO ISSUE PROPER IDENTIFICATION TO TWO CANADIAN OFFICERS ATTACHED TO CONTROL COMMISSION WHO DISAPPEARED

Mr. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary for the Minister of National Defence who does not seem to be in the House. Perhaps he is still at the weekend western wake. Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence outline to the House, what the officers were doing at the time of their capture, why they were not issued ICCS identification, and were ordered without escorts into Viet Cong held territory?

Mr. Leonard Hopkins (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, the two officers were on routine duty at the time and got out of their jeep to investigate an incident. They were taken captive at that time.

Mr. McKinnon: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary missed the second part of the question. Why were they not issued ICCS identification cards?

Mr. Hopkins: I will take that question as notice, Mr. Speaker, but I would like to point out to the hon. member that the Minister of National Defence is today in his home riding.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nowlan: After Vancouver, that is where he should be if he wants to save his skin.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I am not sure whether the parliamentary secretary had completed his answer to the question. If not, he will be recognized, after which I will recognize the hon. member for Lisgar.

Mr. Hopkins: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I just want to state that the minister is in the hon. member's home riding.

[Mr. McKinnon.]

AGRICULTURE

SUGAR BEETS—POSSIBLE INCREASE IN DEFICIENCY PAYMENTS AND ACREAGE—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Minister of Agriculture. Since sugar beet producers asked some time ago for a 10 per cent increase in the deficiency payments for sugar beets, and in view of the fact that no word has yet been forthcoming from the government on this matter, can the minister state at this time the position of the federal government?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, we discussed this request just recently. The price of sugar beets, even granting their request for a support price, would not come near what they are going to receive for their sugar beets this year. Therefore, according to what sugar beet growers have told me, the matter is not that urgent.

Mr. Murta: As a supplementary question, can the Minister of Agriculture say if there is any action being taken by the government to increase total Canadian acreage of sugar beets so that our farmers may produce more sugar beets for Canadian consumption?

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, this was part of the discussion that took place just recently, and we are still considering this proposition. I stated earlier in the House that I am very determined that we will increase our sugar beet production and our refining of sugar beet production in Canada.

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CANADIAN COASTGUARD

POSSIBLE TRANSFER OF NAVIGATION AND ENGINEERING STUDENTS AS WELL AS SENIOR OFFICIALS OF COLLEGES TO CORNWALL OR OTTAWA

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Transport, may I direct my question to the acting minister who probably will give it some attention. Can he advise if instructions have gone out to the Canadian Coastguard College to the effect that third and fourth year navigation and engineering students are to report for the fall term at either Cornwall or Ottawa, rather than at the present location?

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Acting Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I will take that question as notice for the minister and get a reply as soon as I can.

Mr. Muir: I wish to thank the minister for replying. Would he also advise if senior officials of the college have been advised to secure housing in either Cornwall or Ottawa by September 1 or thereabouts for the fall term of the college?

Mr. Jamieson: Yes, Mr. Speaker.