

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

U.S.S.R.-CANADA PROTOCOL ON CONSULTATION—CONSIDERATION BY HOUSE OF COMMONS

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Acting Prime Minister in connection with the treaty, misnamed protocol, negotiated by the Prime Minister and the Soviet Union. Is it the intention of the government as a condition precedent to final acceptance to have this document brought before the House for discussion, debate and decision?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the agreement has not been misnamed; it is a protocol, not a treaty. I have tabled it in the House and so far as I can see it is being debated during the question period.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, will the government take the first opportunity to set aside a government day in order that this document can in fact be considered by the House?

Mr. Sharp: As I recall the situation, Mr. Speaker, there are many opposition days available on which the opposition would have plenty of time, if it wished, to discuss this or any other matter on which we would like to hear their views.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, am I to take it from the Acting Prime Minister that he is inviting the opposition to take the first opportunity on an opposition day to bring forward this matter?

Mr. Sharp: I would be delighted to hear the views of the opposition, which apparently are opposed to opening consultations with the Soviet Union on matters that have been raised in the House.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. It seems to me that a debate is under way. The Chair will now recognize the hon. member for Greenwood.

INQUIRY AS TO SUSPENSION OF DEVELOPMENT AID TO PAKISTAN

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister. In light of the answer he gave to a question yesterday when he said that the United Kingdom and the United States of America have not suspended economic aid to Pakistan, I should like to ask whether the United Kingdom and the United States have ceased to make new commitments for economic aid to Pakistan pending a solution of the crisis in East Pakistan, and what is the Canadian government's attitude toward this matter?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian position is that we are not entering into any new commitments but we are carrying on with those that have been made. I understand that this is more or less the general policy of all donor countries.

Inquiries of the Ministry

AID FOR REFUGEES FROM EAST PAKISTAN

Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Will he tell us whether the government is making or planning to make any direct donation in respect of the refugees from East Pakistan now in India?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Yes, Mr. Speaker. As I said in answer to a question yesterday, I hope before the week is out to be able to announce the amount of our contribution.

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CONSUMER AFFAIRS

ACTION TO RESTRAIN ROLLED STEEL PRICE INCREASES—REQUEST FOR STATEMENT ON GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. John Lundrigan (Gander-Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister. Can he inform the House whether the government had any prior information in respect of the rolled steel price increases announced today, and can he indicate whether any effort was made a priori to bring about some restraint on this increase which I believe amounts to over 4 per cent?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I was personally not informed and so far as I know my colleagues were not. I would have to check, however, to ascertain whether I can speak for all my colleagues in this regard.

Mr. Lundrigan: Perhaps the Acting Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance or some other member of the cabinet can indicate whether any representation has been made as of today by way of a formal response from the government to the companies—I believe three major Canadian companies are involved—concerning whether the increases are justified? Also, has the government taken a position on the announced increases?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the information just came to my attention this morning that there were proposals for increases in July. At present my department is taking a look at the matter, and I am sure my colleague, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, will also be taking a look at it.

Mr. Lundrigan: May I ask the Acting Prime Minister whether he or the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs will make tomorrow or on Friday a statement in the House giving the official response of the government toward these increases?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, I believe the Prices and Incomes Commission has a general responsibility to look at price increases of this kind. I will ascertain from my colleague, when he returns from the consumers' conference he is attending today, whether he would like to supplement the answer that has been given in the House today.