

the selling and pricing policies of certain pharmaceutical houses in respect of new types of drugs.

He said: May I ask that this motion stand, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Stand.

Motion stands.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

CUBA—STATEMENT ON POSITION OF ARRESTED CANADIAN CITIZENS

On the orders of the day:

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): Yesterday the Prime Minister promised to make a statement regarding the two Canadians who are being held prisoner by the Cuban authorities, particularly with reference to whether their trial would be a public trial, and second as to whether the Canadian government would assure themselves that these men would have adequate counsel.

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Yes, Mr. Speaker. I am now in a position to give further information on some of the questions which were asked yesterday. The hon. member for Oxford asked what could be the maximum sentence which might be imposed on the Canadian prisoners. The state prosecutor in Havana has asked in the indictment that the two pilots be given the death penalty.

The right hon. Leader of the Opposition inquired whether the trial would be held in public. We have been told that the trial will be held in public and that local and Canadian correspondents will be permitted to attend. An officer of the Canadian embassy in Havana will also be allowed to be present.

The hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam a moment ago, and the Leader of the Opposition earlier, inquired about defence counsel. With regard to Canadian counsel, the Secretary of State for External Affairs informed the house on November 14 that we had asked the Cuban authorities that Canadian counsel be permitted but that our request had been denied. There has been no change in that regard. We are informed that the participation of foreign counsel is not permitted under the Cuban system. However, with the help of our embassy in Havana, each of the accused has now secured his own Cuban defence counsel.

Beyond this, Mr. Speaker, I feel I should not go at this time. I should like to emphasize, however, that the government is following the case with the closest attention and the most serious concern, and is in contact with the foreign ministry in Havana and the Cuban ambassador here. At all times, Mr. Speaker, we have been concerned for the welfare of these two Canadian citizens and

Inquiries of the Ministry

are doing everything we can for them. Likewise, Mr. Speaker, we would not wish to do or say anything at this moment that might not be in their interests.

Mr. W. R. Nesbitt (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question in view of the Prime Minister's reply. In the event that the two accused Canadians in Cuba did not, in the opinion of the government, receive a fair trial as we understand it, would the government make clear to the government of Cuba in this eventuality that possible retaliatory measures might be considered by the Canadian government?

Mr. Pearson: I do not think it would be in the interests of the prisoners themselves at this moment to go beyond what I have already said on the eve of their trial.

RUSSIA—REPRESENTATIONS RESPECTING PERSECUTION OF JEWS

On the orders of the day:

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I was asked a question by the right hon. Leader of the Opposition about persecution of the Jews in the Soviet union and whether the Canadian government had made any representations on this matter to the Soviet embassy. I have an answer, Mr. Speaker, and it is rather longer than I would like, but it is a very complicated and difficult question so I hope the house will bear with me.

The government has received occasional representations from various Jewish organizations in Canada on the question of anti-semitism in the Soviet union. Several of the representations have related specifically to the numbers of Jews convicted for economic misdemeanors and sentenced to death or long prison terms.

I find it particularly unfortunate that any government should find it necessary to resort to those penalties for economic crimes which were abandoned in many countries of the world at least a century ago. Although the penalties have been levied against persons of various nationalities and faiths within the U.S.S.R., the disproportionate number of Jews given severe sentences may reflect the historical tradition of anti-semitism which has prevailed among the population, even though there is no evidence to suggest a state program encouraging anti-semitic tendencies. There is also an element of religious persecution within the U.S.S.R. which is directed not only against the Jews but also against Christians, Muslims and other religious believers. I am sure that not only the government but all the members of this house would join in condemning such persecution in all