

Inquiries of the Ministry

did the United States government, in any form or through any agency, inform the Minister of Trade and Commerce about this change, in view of the fact that their action is in contravention, as I said in my earlier question, of their solemn international obligations?

Mr. Sharp: I hesitate to get into a debate with the hon. member about the nature of the obligations which have been undertaken.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Sharp: The hon. member has been making statements, Mr. Speaker. His statements are to the effect that the United States has broken some solemn international obligations. I would hesitate to give a view on that without looking into the nature of those obligations myself. This is a grave charge the hon. member has made against the United States administration, and I should like to be sure whether it is justified.

An hon. Member: What about answering the question?

Mr. Sharp: That is what I am endeavouring to do, if the hon. member would listen. I assure the house that it is the desire that there should be the greatest possible stability in agricultural prices. I share the hon. member's dislike of government funds being used to subsidize the export of agricultural products.

Mr. Churchill: You are making a speech.

Mr. Sharp: I am of the opinion that the price reduction made in the case of Durum wheat is excessive. But this is a commercial decision made by the United States in what it considers to be its own interests, and we must compete with them. We have made to the United States administration and shall continue to make known our desire for the greatest possible stability.

Mr. Churchill: Answer the question.

Mr. Hamilton: I think it is very clear now that the answer to my question is no.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Hamilton: My next question is a related one. Has the government of France had any contact at all with the government of Canada with regard to their decision, and the decision of the European common market countries announced yesterday that they will subsidize wheat sales to China not only in contravention of the GATT arrangement but in direct contravention of the international wheat agreement?

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Mr. Sharp: The answer is yes.

Mr. Hamilton: Can the minister inform the house at what time—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I realize the importance of this question, but it does seem to me the minister has attempted to answer as far as he can be expected to answer without notice. Surely we do not want to enter upon a debate at this time.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): May I ask the minister whether these recent happenings with regard to the United States reduction in the price of Durum wheat will have any effect on the discussions concerning the international wheat agreement which began last Wednesday, and whether the minister anticipates there is likely to be an extension of the agreement, which expires next July?

Mr. Sharp: I am sure all these developments in the wheat situation will have an effect on the discussions which are proceeding at the international wheat council. However, all members of the council have recommended to their governments an extension of the international wheat agreement in its present form. The only difference of view is on whether the extension should be for one year or for two years.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

COMPLETION OF REDISTRIBUTION BEFORE ELECTION

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Reid Scott (Danforth): I wish to direct a question to the Prime Minister prompted by statements made by some of his colleagues in the government. In view of the provisions of section 51 of the British North America Act which make mandatory a redistribution after each census, and in view of the public necessity to have the next parliament represent at least the Canada of 1961 rather than the Canada of 1951, can the right hon. gentleman assure the Canadian public that barring defeat in the house on a matter of confidence there will be no general election until this vital matter of redistribution has been completed?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not know whether the hon. member is really serious in asking this question, but it is not up to the Chair to wonder.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): I am sure that in view of the statements of various ministers the Prime