

Inquiries of the Ministry

he will discover that while all these matters about which he has spoken were considered and, I think, approved by the officers of the Department of National Defence and perhaps, though I have not all the details, by the minister of national defence, that is not the same as to say that they were approved or even considered by either the cabinet defence committee or even by the cabinet. If the Prime Minister will look up the records of the cabinet he will find out, I think, that this particular matter which was approved so quickly after the election by the government of the right hon. gentleman was not considered in any way, shape or form by the cabinet defence committee or by the cabinet, and no decision can therefore have been taken with regard to it.

INQUIRY AS TO REDUCTION IN EXPENDITURES

On the orders of the day:

Mr. H. R. Argue (Assiniboia): My question is directed to the Prime Minister. Has the attention of the Prime Minister been drawn to the reported statement of Lieutenant General Simonds that if the \$300 million wasted on that dead duck the CF-105 had been used to stockpile Canadian wheat in Europe it would have been spent to much greater advantage? Has the Prime Minister considered a substantial reduction in current military expenditures, and would he consider using any moneys thus saved to stockpile wheat in Europe, or otherwise to give economic assistance to the free nations?

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): I have not seen the report of the speech by Lieutenant General Simonds or the opinions allegedly expressed by him. After all, it is a matter of opinion. If he did express what has been stated by my hon. friend it is a matter that would have to be considered in all its implications before any answer could be given to it.

Mr. Argue: I wonder whether the Prime Minister might answer that part of my question which asked if a reduction in current military expenditures had been considered, and whether such a reduction would be used for economic assistance by way of wheat stockpiling or otherwise.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think hon. members will agree that if they receive an answer to their question, whether or not it is a satisfactory answer, they should not attempt to improve the situation by asking the question again; because there is no right on the part of hon. members to insist upon an answer.

Mr. Argue: Mr. Speaker, I would point out to you that I was merely repeating my question to the minister, which I submit he had

[Mr. Pearson.]

not answered. If he considers it answered, that is perfectly all right by me.

Mr. Speaker: I understood that it is part of the question that the hon. member is repeating. I was suggesting that this is not a regular procedure, and I ask the hon. member not to push the matter further.

UNITED NATIONS

FAO—STATEMENT BY U.S. REPRESENTATIVE ON WHEAT DISPOSAL POLICY

On the orders of the day:

Right Hon. J. G. Gardiner (Melville): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask a question of the Minister of Trade and Commerce or the Minister of Agriculture. Has the government any report or comment to make on the announcement reported to have been made at FAO by Mr. Charles Hoeven, representing the United States, that it is their intention to increase expenditures in their policy of making food products, including wheat, easily available to nations throughout the world?

Hon. D. S. Harkness (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I have not seen the announcement to which the hon. member has referred. I do not know what is in it, and therefore I am not really in a position to comment on it.

However, perhaps I should say this. I was present last Thursday in Rome when the United States Secretary for Agriculture, Mr. Ezra Benson, made a speech of about three-quarters of an hour to an hour in length in regard to American ideas concerning surplus disposal. I may say that the whole tenor of his speech was that in his opinion and in the opinion of his government the Americans had done a great humanitarian work in providing food for hungry peoples throughout the world, and he was assuring the meeting that his country would continue to do this. He did not go into the matter of surplus disposal as far as other countries were concerned. The whole tenor of his speech was in regard to his government's intention to continue to make food available where there were people suffering from hunger.

Mr. M. J. Coldwell (Rosetown-Biggart): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture has described the American disposal of surplus food as a great humanitarian effort. Is there any indication that the government of Canada will follow this humanitarian example?

Mr. Harkness: I did not describe it as that; I said Mr. Benson had described it as that. Of course I would agree that there has been a very large element of humanitarianism in the policy followed by the United States with regard to supplying surplus food to meet the needs of countries in southeast Asia.