

Inquiries of the Ministry

following his answers yesterday with respect to the report which has appeared in the press that there will be a second underground test on Amchitka Island in the Aleutians? The minister said yesterday that he had received no notification from the government of the United States. Does he intend to make inquiries of the United States when such an underground test will be undertaken and what the strength will be, and on the basis of that evidence will the government then decide whether or not to make representations to the United States, along with other countries which I understand are protesting?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. gentleman has misunderstood what I said yesterday. I did not say that we did not know approximately when the next tests would take place. We had been told they were approximately a couple of years off, and some indication was then given of when they would be held. What we have not yet received is information on the first test, upon which we could base any protest we might think it was suitable for us to make. It should also be understood that the Canadian government is opposed to underground tests, whether by the United States, the Soviet Union or China.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): A supplementary question. In view of the concern of the people living on the Pacific coast, both in Canada and the United States, is the minister urging the government of the United States to supply him with the necessary data on the last test so that the Canadian government will be in a position to make an intelligent appraisal of the situation and register its protest if the test is of such magnitude as to constitute a danger to the people living on the Pacific coast?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, I have already indicated to the House on several occasions that we have inquiries with the United States government now.

[Translation]

CANADIAN SOVEREIGNTY

GEORGES BANK—PROTESTS BY UNITED STATES RESPECTING ISSUE OF OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION PERMITS

Mr. Léonel Beaudoin (Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

21701—50

Could he tell us whether he is aware of protests made by the American government concerning the issue of permits for developing underwater natural gas and oil wells in the Gulf of Maine?

[English]

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Yes, Mr. Speaker. I think the House knows that there is an unsettled question concerning the line of demarcation on the continental shelf between Canada and the United States in that area. These discussions are continuing and the United States has made a formal statement of its position, just as we have.

[Translation]

Mr. Beaudoin: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the minister.

Did the Canadian government make sure that these permits have been issued for explorations within Canadian waters?

[English]

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, we have issued permits in waters that we claim are Canadian waters but the provisions regarding the line demarcating the continental shelf between the two countries are subject to agreement between the two countries. If agreement is not reached it is assumed that the equidistant line is the correct line, and we are issuing permits on that basis now.

POST OFFICE

PRESENT POSITION OF MONTREAL POSTAL DISPUTE

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Postmaster General concerning the mail hold-up still afflicting the people of Montreal and the tangled web of contradictions as to the responsibility for the deplorable condition of the mail service. Can the minister advise if anyone is talking to anyone else about improving this situation, and what are his predictions as to success?

Hon. Eric W. Kierans (Postmaster General and Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, as I have said earlier I was in contact with the Secretary of the CSN on Saturday and, as he knows, I am always at his disposition to continue the talks further.

An hon. Member: Is anyone listening?

Mr. Macquarrie: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. Considering the obvious