

POSSIBLE AVENUE OF COMPENSATION

Miss Pat Carney (Vancouver Centre): Madam Speaker, considering the fact that the Russians are apparently reluctant to pay compensation for the deaths of these Canadians and others on board the downed Korean aircraft, is there some way in which compensation could be extracted through higher fuel prices, such as the oil export charge on Russian planes refuelling at Mirabel?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, we certainly cannot do that for the next 60 days.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

U.S.S.R.—RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR COMPENSATION FOR RELATIVES OF VICTIMS IN DOWNED KOREAN AIRLINER

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. He may know that the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Kornienko, has stated that there will be no compensation payable with respect to the downing of the KAL 007 aircraft. Mr. Kornienko added, "I view the question as irrelevant."

Would the Minister indicate to the House if there has been any response to the note that was delivered to the Soviets and, in the event that the Soviets have said no to compensation, as appears to be the case, what further steps will the Minister be taking to guarantee that there will in fact be compensation?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, I think that the Hon. Member's interpretation of the Soviet spokesman's statement may not be fully accurate. The Deputy Foreign Minister said that compensation should be paid, but not by the Soviet Union. What I have read is an acknowledgement by the Soviet Union that there is a liability, an obligation, that must be met.

I do not think it is unusual to have this response because we had a similar experience some time ago with respect to a claim affecting the Soviet Union when, in the initial stages, the Soviet Union refused to accept any responsibility whatsoever. I never thought that the Soviet Union would come forward very quickly and acknowledge a responsibility and express a willingness to provide compensation. We intend to continue our efforts, and hope to meet the same success as we did in the past.

Mr. Stevens: Surely the Minister is not suggesting to the House that there is any other nation responsible for the downing of this jet than the Soviet nation?

Oral Questions

REQUEST THAT CONTENTS OF DIPLOMATIC NOTE BE TABLED

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel): Madam Speaker, would the Minister now table the contents of the note that was delivered to the Soviet Union? There are many precedents for tabling such notes, including the tabling by the Right Hon. Member for Yellowhead of the note with respect to Afghanistan.

Second, would he indicate specifically to the House what the further steps were which he referred to Monday night, when he said that he would be taking further steps to secure compensation with respect to this matter?

● (1450)

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, with respect to further steps, we have begun and will continue consultation with the bereaved families on the question of compensation. I think that process has to be undertaken, no matter how unpleasant it is, particularly for the bereaved families. Once we have completed that process we intend to make a claim in a single presentation to the Soviet Government. That is our bilateral approach. Other nations as well, including the United States, have indicated that they will be making a claim; the South Korean Government has done the same thing. I believe that we will all have to proceed bilaterally and keep pressing forward the legitimacy of this particular compensation claim.

I want to correct the Hon. Member if he concluded from my statement that I inferred that the Soviet Union had no responsibility or that another nation or the airline had responsibility. It is quite the contrary. I believe the Soviet Union has full responsibility which it has not yet acknowledged. But what the Soviet Union did, or its spokesman, in the statement was to admit that compensation should be paid. In this case, if I read correctly, they viewed that it should be paid by somebody else, not the Soviet Union.

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FISHERIES

COLLAPSE OF EAST COAST COMPANY

Miss Coline Campbell (South West Nova): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. Due to the recent financial collapse of a major East Coast fish company, can the Minister assure the House that the groundfish inventories presently held by the bank's receivers will not be dumped at lower than market prices on the existing market, and therefore avoid a fish price war among East Coast companies?

Hon. Pierre De Bané (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, I am happy to report to the Hon. Member that there is no evidence to suggest that fishing companies are engaged in a price war. I would even add that it would be most irresponsible to suggest that because this is what—