

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, December 17, 1981

The House met at 2 p.m.

● (1405)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

POLAND—RESOLUTION PASSED AT PUBLIC MEETING IN
TORONTO—MOTION UNDER S.O. 43

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I rise under the provisions of Standing Order 43 to present a motion. Last night at Nathan Phillips Square in Toronto thousands of concerned Canadians, including members of all political parties, gathered to show their concern and support for the people of Poland in the form of the following resolution:

We, Canadians of Polish descent, are deeply concerned about the current events in Poland, and we call upon the Canadian government as cosignatory of the Helsinki Accords to undertake the following actions:

1. To press for the immediate lifting of martial law in Poland and the release of all Solidarity officials.
2. To press for the reinstatement of the rights of workers to form free trade unions.
3. To publicly state that no intervention by third parties into the internal affairs of Poland will be tolerated.
4. To send to Poland, for distribution by non-government organizations, significant economic aid in the form of food, medical supplies and agricultural machinery and feedstuffs in order that the people of Poland survive the coming winter.

We trust that the voice of the Canadian government as international mediator will be heard and that the conflicts in Poland will be resolved in a just and lasting manner.

Therefore I move, seconded by the hon. member for Oshawa (Mr. Broadbent):

That this House express its concern by supporting the resolution introduced last night by the Canadian Polish Congress and approved by the thousands of Canadians there present.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Madam Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for this motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Does the House agree to the said motion?

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, I wish to address this matter very briefly, as I am sure the hon. member for Oshawa, the

seconded of the motion, and the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacGuigan) would simply like to underline the grave concern which is felt by Canadians across the country about the situation in Poland, and particularly to underline the importance with which we, in the House and in this party, feel this matter be treated as a question that the rights and freedoms so recently won by the citizens of Poland be preserved and be free from any interference by the Soviet Union or by other outside forces.

It is for that reason that we have introduced this motion under the provisions of Standing Order 43 today. I am certainly pleased that it has received the unanimous consent of the House. I am pleased that the Secretary of State for External Affairs and the Government of Canada will be fortified in actions they might take by knowing that they have the support not only of the thousands of Canadians who met last night in Toronto, but also the unanimous support of the House of Commons.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, as the seconded of the motion I rise eagerly to support its purpose and the ideas which lie behind it. I think people the world over, beginning in August of 1980, were impressed, were delighted with, and ultimately gave their total support to the courageous movement of the people of Poland to begin to take the very difficult steps toward achieving a free society within their own land. We have seen in the past year, in my judgment, the most remarkable mass movement since World War II by a people in face of incredible odds to determine the conditions of their lives, not by forces from without their borders but by themselves. In recent days we have seen that courage, that determination, and that fundamental love for freedom put in jeopardy. I and my colleagues strongly support the principle and the details of this motion.

I conclude by saying that I am sure I speak not only for Canadians of Polish ancestry but for all Canadians from one part of our land to the other when I wish the people of Poland well in this moment of trial.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1410)

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, I received a copy of this motion just after coming into the House. I agreed to its being debated so that we could have some moments to reflect on this very serious situation here in Parliament.