

Oral Questions

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I can only report to the hon. gentleman that I read the papers as well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker, I am from a marine area myself. I hate to see the closure of lighthouses, but the world changes and the world moves on, and this is a program in effect in all parts of Canada. British Columbia is a province of particular sensibilities, and I am certainly going to be very sensitive to those sensibilities.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

FIJI—REPRESENTATION AT COMMONWEALTH MEETING

Mrs. Mary Collins (Capilano): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

Given the confusing and unsettling situation in Fiji where a second coup took place this week, can the Minister advise the House who Canada now recognizes as the Head of Government in Fiji?

Given that the Commonwealth Conference in Vancouver is fast approaching, will Fiji still be considered as a participant in the meeting and, indeed, has the Minister received any representations that Fiji will be represented at the meeting?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. Naturally it is of interest to British Columbia Members and to those across the country, and I know that the Hon. Member for Capilano has followed questions in the Pacific area with particular interest.

The Government recognizes the Governor General of Fiji as being the sole legitimate source of executive authority in that country. As Canada recognizes the Governor General as the Head of Government, the Governor General or his representative would be welcome at the Vancouver meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government.

As far as we are concerned, Fiji is and remains a full member of the Commonwealth.

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REFUGEES

GOVERNMENT POSITION ON LEGISLATION

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Immigration. It concerns part of a secret and very disturbing cabinet document which I

received that was approved by the Planning and Priorities Committee of Cabinet.

The document is entitled "Sweeteners" and suggests increasing future refugee levels simply, and I quote, "to improve the public perception of the Government's commitment to the refugee issue . . . which would neutralize criticism that this Government does not care about refugee protection".

How can the Minister justify such a cynical strategy which attempts to artificially sweeten refugee legislation which the Government recognizes is seriously flawed?

Rather than playing with the lives of refugees through its public relations gimmickry, why does the Government not implement legislation which is truly designed to stop human suffering and to protect human lives?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Minister of State (Immigration)): Mr. Speaker, this Government need not apologize for our refugee policy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Weiner: Our generosity has been demonstrated. We do more for the real refugees of the world on a per capita basis than any other nation. This year we will be bringing in almost 20,000 people under refugee and humanitarian programs. We are getting to those in the most desperate need.

In addition, we contribute tens of millions of dollars to international humanitarian agencies, to food aid, et cetera. Anybody who comes to our door and seeks protection, those in need of protection, will never be turned away. If a person does not have a safe haven, we will make sure that he is given a haven.

VISA REQUIREMENTS

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, in the same "Sweeteners" document, Cabinet states that after Bill C-55 in law "visas would not be required to deter claimants from countries with no significant human rights problems", yet "visas will remain a necessity to control arrivals from countries where human rights problems do exist".

Therefore I would like to ask the Minister, particularly after his answer, how can the Government decide that people who are fleeing countries where serious human rights violations have been recognized by Canada, are to be systematically restricted by the use of visas?

Are they not the real victims who should be addressed by a true refugee policy? Why does the Government not put an end to this Machiavellian strategy which does nothing but bring dishonour to the country—

Mr. Speaker: I think the Hon. Member has put his question.