

Oral Questions

[Translation]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Hon. André Ouellet (Papineau—Saint-Michel): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. Following Nelson Mandela's historic visit to this House, I wish the government would tell us whether it intends to make a positive response to Mr. Mandela's request that economic sanctions against South Africa be maintained, and second, could the government explain why, despite its statements on economic sanctions, the level of Canada's trade relations with South Africa still remains very high?

[English]

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I believe it has already been made clear by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for External Affairs that the Government of Canada intends to continue with the present economic sanctions until such time as there is a clear indication that the apartheid system in South Africa has been done away with. I do not think there is any doubt about policy in that regard.

With respect to the question of trade with South Africa, it is minimal with the exception of some very necessary material that we import for use in certain of our Canadian industries. There certainly has been no increase in trade with South Africa.

Hon. André Ouellet (Papineau—Saint-Michel): Mr. Speaker, I differ with the minister because, according to the data that we have, despite all the reassurances given by the government, trade seems to be moving up. Therefore, there is a discrepancy between what the government is saying and what is actually taking place.

As a supplementary question, I would like to ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he is ready to ask his government to reconsider its decision to refuse to give direct subsidies to the ANC.

The government has instead recommended the creation of a solidarity fund. Through the auspices of Senator Graham, we on this side will participate with others in Canada to raise funds to help the democratic effort that will take place in South Africa. More particularly, we should help the political aspirations of the ANC.

Is the government ready to match dollar for dollar contributions given to the ANC by Canadian citizens?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, one of the constant principles of our foreign policy is that we do not provide financial assistance to any political organization overseas. That is a principle that has been endorsed by all three Canadian political parties and approved on a number of occasions when there has been a parliamentary review of foreign policy. We cannot provide funding for the political work of the African National Congress.

We have provided humanitarian education assistance to ANC members through NGOs here in Canada and international organizations were active in encouraging a funding dialogue between the ANC and other groups in South Africa. We are prepared to provide constitutional advice and assistance to them and to assist as they head into crucial negotiations. We have encouraged private fund-raising initiatives organized by the Nelson Mandela Fund, which is also endorsed by the three political parties in Canada.

The principle, as I say, is clear and accepted up to now by all three political parties that we do not provide financial assistance to any political organization overseas.

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MEECH LAKE ACCORD

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. The Deputy Prime Minister said earlier, in response to a question from the Leader of the Opposition, that there is a procedural problem in Manitoba.

I beg to differ, Mr. Speaker. I think there is a very long-standing problem of lack of respect and consideration for aboriginal issues in the country which has culminated in the problem we see now regarding Meech Lake.

The government has said in its Throne Speeches, and in fact last week the Prime Minister said: "—the first victims of 1981-82 were not Quebecers. They were aboriginal peoples—"

The government has spoken very well about aboriginal concerns but has taken very little action, except the action taken during the budget to cut back on funding for aboriginal communications.