

## Oral Questions

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

## EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

## VIET NAM—CLOSING OF EMBASSY IN SAIGON—GOVERNMENT ACTION TO AID VIETNAMESE DESIRING TO COME TO CANADA

**Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Acting Prime Minister. Can he tell the House what steps the government is taking to correct the unfortunate situation in Saigon where many South Vietnamese, including many who worked faithfully for our government, seem to have been sadly deserted by the Canadian government. Vietnamese people have been told to return to our embassy for visa processing only to find that the embassy is closed. Will he in general declare today that in this grave situation Canadian compassion will be stronger than the administrative inhibitions of an apparently collapsing regime?

● (1110)

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, we have no information to confirm the report that there are Vietnamese who have permits to leave Saigon issued by the Vietnamese government and who would be able to get to the airport in order to come to Canada. I find this, as do members of the House of Commons, to be an extremely difficult and tragic situation.

Some hon. Members: Shabby.

**Mr. Sharp:** The Canadian government, like the governments of all countries except France and the United States, decided to withdraw our mission from Saigon because of the threat to the lives of the members of the missions. This was not a decision taken in isolation; it was taken in consultation with all our friends and allies.

An hon. Member: Except the United States and France.

**Mr. Sharp:** The United States, of course, is in a very special position in Viet Nam as an ally of that country once engaged in its military operations. They have armed forces in or near Viet Nam; we have nothing like that nor have any of our other allies. The French have made a decision to stay for quite different reasons. So, I do not believe that the Canadian government has been in any way callous, and my colleague, the Minister of Manpower and Immigration, will be very happy to give the facts as to the numbers of Vietnamese who were able to get out, and our willingness to take more if they can obtain permission and have some way of getting to the airport.

**Mr. Macquarrie:** Since the minister is not informed, will he activate the forces of our government to find out what the situation is? Will he find out if it is now the advice of Canadian personnel to tell the suffering Vietnamese to try the Americans because they have been able to cut through the red tape; and further, will he find now some use for the aircraft sitting in Hong Kong which, having delivered the pianos, the people and the cars, might now go back and get some more people?

**Mr. Sharp:** The information that I have from the United States government is that they are also observing the laws

[Mr. Speaker.]

of Viet Nam. Moreover, I want to make it quite clear that there was plenty of space in our aircraft to carry other personnel if they had been able to get through the checkpoint at the airport. I do not think that the members of the House quite realize that there were police, there were military forces, guarding the airport who would not permit Vietnamese to go through the airport to board the planes because they did not have the permission of the Vietnamese government.

## VIET NAM—SUGGESTION CANADIAN ACTION TO AID VIETNAMESE DESIRING TO COME TO CANADA SHOULD BE SIMILAR TO THAT OF UNITED STATES

**Mr. Jake Epp (Provencher):** My question is for the Acting Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker. Why did Canada not take the more humanitarian approach of the United States? According to reports, Americans have slashed through the red tape of the local government and are pulling out hundreds of Vietnamese who have worked with them. Why did we not take that approach rather than complying to the "T" with the restrictions, so unnecessary at this time, that the local government in Saigon is putting on us?

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister):** I know that the U.S. government would not appreciate the kind of comments being made by the hon. member. So far as I know, they are obeying the laws of Viet Nam.

## VIET NAM—ALLEGED DIFFERENCE IN TREATMENT OF CHILEAN REFUGEES COMPARED TO VIETNAMESE

**Mr. Jake Epp (Provencher):** Why has the Canadian government adopted such a double standard with regard to refugees? In the Chilean situation, much pressure was put to have Chilean refugees come to this country, but the same standard is not being applied in South Viet Nam.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister):** Exactly the same standard has been applied. The difference is that the Chilean government gave permission for the Chileans to come to Canada. We have not been able to obtain the permission of the government of South Viet Nam.

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## FINANCE

## INCREASE IN MORTGAGE INTEREST RATES BY BANKS—GOVERNMENT ACTION TO REDUCE

**Mr. Max Saltzman (Waterloo-Cambridge):** Mr. Speaker, I had a question for the Minister of Finance, but in his absence, perhaps I can direct it to the Acting Prime Minister, who is a former Minister of Finance. Several major banks seem to have increased their mortgage interest rates in the last few days in response to the increase in demand for mortgages arising out of the demand for resale housing. Since such a move on the part of the banks to increase their interest rates will, in effect, wipe out all the benefits the government is trying to inject into the housing mar-