

Oral Questions

services which will also provide to the handicapped people facilities that they did not have in the past.

[Translation]

I understand that in the routes which have been cut, it will perhaps be more difficult, but I also know that the handicapped people understand that the finances of this country have to be managed and they agree with what the government has done with VIA Rail cuts.

Mr. Bevilacqua: Mr. Speaker, I must question the sincerity of the minister. More than a year after Parliament—

Mr. Speaker: I know the hon. member probably did not mean what he said, but one does not here question the sincerity of other hon. members. I know he will want to put his question.

Some Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Bevilacqua: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw. But the facts remain, unfortunately, for the minister.

The disabled get nothing but inaction from this government. More than a year after Parliament amended the National Transportation Act to enhance accessibility of federally regulated transportation to the disabled, the National Transportation Agency has still not acted to put these amendments into effect.

Why has the minister not urged the National Transportation Agency to act on this legislation, or did the minister intentionally remain silent so as to give VIA Rail false grounds to cut personnel service for disabled Canadians?

Mr. Bouchard (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, I hope that my friend knows that the National Transportation Agency is a body independent of the minister. They can make the decision and they can apply their decision. Perhaps it was a fact when the hon. member's party was in power, but it is not a fact on this side of the House to overrule what is done by the National Transportation Agency.

I want to say very sincerely to my friend that I was Secretary of State for two years and today it is true that with the present Secretary of State, disabled people have never been as well served as they are today.

EXTERNAL AID

Mr. Jean-Guy Guilbault (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Since so many people are now leaving East Germany to find a new home in West Germany, could the Minister inform the House whether the Government will offer assistance to the West German Government, and if so, how does he intend to proceed?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I just received a request for assistance from the government of the Federal Republic of Germany, asking Canada to provide temporary residence in this country for refugees who have just left the Democratic Republic of Germany. We indicated in our reply that we were willing to help.

[English]

I received a request yesterday from the West German government asking if on our military bases in West Germany there might be barracks or other space available to provide temporary housing to aid the West German government in responding to the flow of refugees from East Germany.

After consultation with my colleague, the Minister of National Defence and our commanding officers in Germany, we have replied today, the day after the request, indicating that Canada is prepared to co-operate, prepared to make barracks space and other help available to help the West German government accommodate the refugees from East Germany.

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MEECH LAKE ACCORD

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister in the absence of the Prime Minister. Let me begin, first of all, by thanking the Prime Minister, the leader of my party and the Leader of the Official Opposition for the very excellent manner in which they have defended Meech Lake. I want to thank them very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!