

ONTARIO ELECTION

Mr. Roger Gallaway (Sarnia—Lambton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with only 24 days to the Ontario election, Bob Rae is getting desperate.

Last Friday in Thunder Bay the premier and his nearly defunct party reached a new low in campaign dirty tricks. In the middle of an announcement by Liberal leader Lyn McLeod, a member of the NDP's own provincial council, Alex Ng, rushed the podium, screaming in protest.

Later Mr. Ng admitted to the media he was ordered to disrupt the event by the NDP's central campaign, which had paid his flight to Thunder Bay.

The premier apologized for the incident and announced that Mr. Ng was withdrawing from the campaign. Mr. Ng's career as a paid protester may well be over but at least he had a good start on Bob Rae, who will start looking for a new job on June 9.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

CHECHNYA

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, although the Prime Minister says he is concerned about human rights issues, on his recent trip to Russia to attend ceremonies celebrating the 50th anniversary of V-E Day, it was clear once again that the Canadian government's only priority is trade.

In fact, at the very moment when the Russian army continued its attacks in Chechnya, the Prime Minister was discussing a Team Canada trade mission with his Russian counterpart.

My question is directed to the Prime Minister. Considering the foregoing, would the Prime Minister agree that his attitude and that of his government, which subordinates human rights to strictly commercial interests, does not give the Russian authorities any incentive to show more respect for the rights of the Chechen who are now being attacked by the Russian army?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone knows that I raised the issue of the people of Chechnya with President Yeltsin, and I told him personally that his government's attitude did nothing to further Russia's interests in the world.

We were there to celebrate the 50th anniversary of V-E Day. The Russians made an exceptional contribution since 27 million Russians died during the war. We accepted the invitation as a matter of course.

Oral Questions

My colleagues in the Western world and myself refused to attend the military parade, but we agreed to attend a parade of veterans who fought during the last war. To show our disapproval of what is now happening in one part of Russia, we boycotted their biggest parade.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to accept the Prime Minister's reply, but if he really wanted the Russian authorities to take seriously his concerns about human rights violations in Chechnya, why did the Prime Minister not tell them in advance that he would refuse to attend the military parade, as a form of protest, like other heads of state who were not afraid to speak out?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I made it quite clear, although I may not have had a chance to announce my intentions publicly, but in communications with other heads of state, we agreed we would boycott this big military parade, and we did. The Russian government was well aware that Canada would not attend this parade.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said President Yeltsin gave him assurances that the Russian army had already been replaced by a normal police force in Chechnya. However, immediately after his departure from Russia, the Russian army was again bombing Chechen civilians.

Considering the false assurances the Prime Minister received from the Russian head of state, how does his government intend to put pressure on the Russian authorities to stop human rights violations in Chechnya?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have protested on several occasions. My colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, brought this matter up several times with his Russian counterpart. We are putting as much pressure as possible on the government. And if the problem persists, I will have another opportunity to launch a protest when I meet Mr. Yeltsin in Halifax next month.

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry.

Another item to add to the Power DirecTv file is the submission this company made to the government dictating the steps to be taken to reverse the CRTC's decision allowing Expressvu to begin broadcasting as early as next September but not Power DirecTv.

Will the Minister of Industry admit that he received Power DirecTv's submission and that he dutifully followed all of the instructions contained in the document, which demanded that