

been ordered to set up meetings between armed forces personnel and salesmen from Canada Trust Company for the presentation of a registered retirement savings plan and that in remote areas where it is difficult for the Canada Trust salesmen to reach the bases, commanding officers have been ordered to pass on instruction with the sales kits?

● (1500)

Hon. James Richardson (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, it is correct to say that Canada Trust is setting up a retirement savings plan for those who may wish to join it, but I cannot confirm or deny the actual arrangements which have been outlined.

Mr. McKinnon: Mr. Speaker, if the minister will refer to National Defence Headquarters message 071815Z he will see what I am referring to. Does he see nothing wrong with his department's shilling for Canada Trust in the high pressure sales world of registered retirement savings plans?

Mr. Paproski: Shame!

Mr. Richardson: Mr. Speaker, I think the retirement savings plan will be of benefit to the individuals within the armed forces who participate in it.

Mr. McKinnon: A further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. As a message has gone out to all bases clearly saying that Canada Trust alone has been selected by the department to act as trustee, does the minister not consider this an improper position for the department to take?

Mr. Richardson: Mr. Speaker, the members of the armed forces, as individuals, are entitled to join any retirement savings plan they wish. This is an attempt by the department, after long study, to select a company that can be of service to the individuals of the armed forces who wish to participate in a retirement savings plan. There is absolutely no compulsion of any kind. It is a benefit to the armed forces.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. There is time for one more question.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

VISIT OF MINISTER TO AFRICA—INQUIRY AS TO ROLE OF CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY AND PAUL GERIN-LAJOIE

Mr. Steven E. Paproski (Edmonton Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Will the Minister advise the House if he will be accepting the invitation to visit Africa in April, whether he is going under the auspices of the Canadian International Development Agency and whether Paul Gerin-Lajoie will be accompanying the minister on this "fun-in-the-sun" excursion.

Privilege—Mr. Peters

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I have just had a suggestion from one of my hon. friend's colleagues to join the "fun-in-the-sun", so he ought not to be scandalized at the prospect of that happening. I am planning to take a working visit—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: Are you taking your bathing suit?

Mr. MacEachen:—which I look forward to with a certain amount of trepidation.

Mr. Stanfield: Are you going to Uganda?

Mr. MacEachen: I have not decided on my travelling companions, as yet.

Mr. Speaker: Orders of the day.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis): Mr. Speaker, my question of privilege is related to the fact that I mentioned three times that I would like to ask a supplementary of the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

[English]

With your permission, now that I have been recognized I wish to direct a supplementary question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. My supplementary—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Nowlan: You have not been here long enough.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member must realize that he joins some very impressive company in the House in this regard.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege on behalf of all members of this House. It seems to me that the practice of the House has always been, and I think it is borne out by Roberts and other authorities on procedure, that a question of privilege or point of order shall take precedence over other business being debated. Your Honour has recently seen fit not to hear a point of order or question of privilege at the time of its being raised and to hear it only after the conclusion of a series of discussions.

Apart from whether the point raised just now had merit, I suggest, on behalf of all hon. members, that Your Honour should hear a question of privilege as soon as it is raised. It has always been the practice of the House that we interrupt whoever has the floor in order to allow an hon. member to put his point of order or question of privilege. I suggest that we would be better served if that practice were to continue.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: With respect to the hon. member's point, I have tried, when points of order or questions of privilege have been raised, to indicate to hon. members who are raising them that I see them and recognize that they have a question of privilege or a point of order to raise. In some