

Oral Questions

If it fails to convince Quebecers to vote for separation, the PQ will at least have helped to create jobs for the new supporters of "profitable separatism".

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

• (1415)

[Translation]

BOSNIA

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in a report presented to the Security Council yesterday, the UN Secretary General proposed four options for the role of UN peacekeepers in Bosnia. In another development, the United States is prepared to send ground support troops to Bosnia to reinforce the mandate of the peacekeepers. Meanwhile, there is still no indication of Canada's real intentions with respect to redefining the mandate of the peacekeepers.

Could the Prime Minister tell us quite frankly which of the four options suggested by the UN Secretary General before the Security Council is the one preferred by Canada?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada prefers the option recommended by UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. We believe the mandate should be redefined to make it possible for our troops to avoid the kind of position they are in now.

That is exactly what I said to the Secretary General when I spoke to him on Sunday. He preferred the option favoured by Canada.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canada is now negotiating with the Serbs to let Canadian soldiers volunteer to replace their colleagues who have been taken hostage so they can take turns.

Notwithstanding the noble proposition of our Canadian peacekeepers, could the government tell us whether these exchanges will be restricted to hostages who are ill, because otherwise, it would be tantamount to agreeing that the Serbs have the right to take hostages?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously, the soldiers who are there and who know their colleagues are being held a few kilometres away from the base are trying to find a way to put an end to this situation. They are trying to find a way to end the deadlock. Last year, the situation went on for a few weeks, and the local commanding officer managed to find a solution that was acceptable to all parties.

For the time being, I would rather let the local authorities decide on the best way to obtain the release of the hostages or at least provide for maximum security, under the circumstances.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I must say we are far removed from the days when Lester B. Pearson was a household word in international relations.

Are we to understand that Canada has no clearcut policy on redefining the mandate of the peacekeepers in Bosnia because it no longer has any influence and has ceased to show leadership among peacekeeping forces on the international scene, now that it is not even a member of the contact group and has been relegated to the role of a bit player, merely following the cues given by other countries?

[English]

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just explained that the position taken yesterday by the Secretary-General of the United Nations is exactly the one we proposed to him over the weekend. I personally had a discussion with him on Sunday morning.

We are using all the channels available to us. In that case it is evident that the position of Canada was integral to reaching a conclusion. It is not one that is supported by all participants. We are in constant contact with the United Nations.

I have to say that the Secretary-General of the United Nations recognizes that of all the forces available anywhere in the world, when Canadians are there he can always rely on them because they are the best. He is listening to Canadians as he has done in that case.

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[Translation]

GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. The gross domestic product fell for the second time in as many months. According to Statistics Canada, the GDP fell by 0.2 per cent in February, and by 0.7 per cent in March.

• (1420)

It would appear that the economic slow-down is due to a slump in exportation and domestic consumption. The situation is largely the result of a monetary policy which favours high interest rates, and is not aimed at reducing unemployment.

Why is the government persisting in pursuing the same monetary policy as its predecessors, when it knows that it is bad for the economy and for job creation?

[English]

Hon. Douglas Peters (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I remind the hon. member that the GDP in the first quarter of this year rose, it did not fall. In only two months of the quarter there were minor declines in the GDP.