

desirability of investigation of the subject by a Senate Committee.—(*Honourable Senator Frith*).

**Hon. Royce Frith (Leader of the Opposition):** I make my usual complaint about the ticking clock.

Order stands.

### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

#### PROPOSED CANADIAN AID TO SOVIET UNION AND CURRENT CONSTITUENT REPUBLICS—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming the debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Olson, P.C., calling the attention of the Senate to proposed Canadian aid to the Soviet Union and its current constituent Republics.—(*Honourable Senator Olson, P.C.*).

**Hon. H.A. Olson:** Honourable senators, I will be brief, but this issue is so topical that I do not believe I should pass up an opportunity to say a few words about it today.

I wish to acknowledge that on October 29, Senator Murray and I had a discussion about this matter; that is, Canadian aid to the Soviet Union during this winter. I appreciate the response given by Senator Murray at that time. However, certain things have happened that have exacerbated this situation with respect to shortages of food supplies in many parts of the Soviet Union. Indeed, I can say that Senator Murray, at the end of the discussion we had on October 29, did give an undertaking at page 505 of the *Debates of the Senate* that he would bring back a more detailed response to the matter I raised.

● (1620)

To put this matter in perspective, honourable senators, I put down this inquiry the first day we returned after the summer recess, I believe on September 16 or thereabouts. Senator Barootes and I had been with the Canada-European parliamentary group to Turkey and to several parts of the Soviet Union. While we were there, we were told that they would not have any difficulties during the summer season because there were kitchen gardens and various other things. Even though the economy was in very bad shape and the infrastructure for processing and distributing food and other consumer supplies was in very bad shape—in fact it was disintegrating—they did not expect to have any difficulty until the winter season, because at that time the local food production was adequate even for large cities such as Moscow.

I was concerned, and perhaps Senator Barootes may also speak on this, that we needed to take some action then to ensure that there were increased supplies of basic food requirements such as wheat, flour, and many other things, and that some action should be taken in September to see that it was available. There are two reasons: one is the political and military instability that would come as a result of people being hungry. That is serious enough. I think that the Canadian people would want to help out in this situation simply from a humanitarian base because of the massive and enormous

changes that have taken place in that country over the past year or so, particularly in the last six months.

I have to acknowledge that there has been some change in the Canadian government's attitude that I salute. I agree with it. I was very disappointed when Mr. Gorbachev came to London to plead his cause at a meeting of the G-7 that was going on in the latter part of August, and he was turned down. I thought that was sad and inhumane and I was even more disgusted when I heard the reason. The reason was that they were not satisfied that the republics—since the Soviet Union was coming apart—would take on the obligation of paying the \$65 billion or \$68 billion in foreign debt that the Soviet Union owed mostly to the G-7 nations.

Honourable senators, that is the wrong reason, and Canada should not have supported that reason. This is a situation involving nearly 300 million people. Also, some parts of that country are in charge of 27,000 nuclear weapons of various types, such as ballistic weapons and other things, and surely it is in our own interest to ensure that the changes taking place could proceed without having riots and other political instability that would flow from starvation of those people. I am sorry to say that that has happened.

However, since then—and this is why I feel somewhat better about the situation insofar as Canada's participation is concerned—the Prime Minister, when he was at Stanford University, acknowledged that we needed to throw them a lifeline now. I know that most of the Canadian people would support that view and I acknowledged that a few days ago.

Honourable senators, the reality of what we predicted and what a number of people in Moscow and in Leningrad—now St. Petersburg—told Senator Barootes and I is catching up to us. Inflation on food and other consumer supplies has been so severe that people in outlying areas will no longer bring food into Moscow to exchange it for rubles. I suppose some are still doing so, but if members of collective farms and those in outlying regions are to bring in wheat, meat, vegetables and other things, they do not want rubles. They want some type of barter exchange in order that they can get something useful. They do not want rubles to take home and watch them deteriorate in value so rapidly that they cannot get access to some of the things that they need from the few factories and other businesses that are still operating in the big cities.

As a matter of fact, when Senator Barootes and I were in St. Petersburg we had a meeting with the mayor of St. Petersburg in the city council chambers. He is a very loyal Gorbachev supporter. He said a few days ago that a military coup would now have the support of the people because they are so concerned about having security of supply for food and other consumer goods. There are many other quotations that I could cite about how serious that situation is.

Canada has come a long way since the G-7 meeting that took place in London. I hope that there will be no consideration given to who is to pay the bills for some of this food that we have in surplus supply in Canada, in fact all over North America. If they need it and we can get it to them—and I