

Oral Questions

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity yesterday morning to speak to the Foreign Minister of Turkey. He was on his way to the border areas. I will be speaking to him tomorrow. We are very conscious of the problems that the Turks feel they face with regard to becoming a place of domicile, even on a temporary basis.

We have made it clear that we think the most effective help the international community, including Canada, could give would be to people who were either within Iraq or within temporary camps on the border, on the Turkish or on the Iraqi side. This is obviously a terrible tragedy and one that requires the whole of the world to respond as effectively as we can. We think the most effective response is going to be by way of international organizations.

As others have mentioned at earlier times in the House, one of the difficulties we are dealing with there is quite simply a difficulty of terrain. That makes more direct deliveries of food aid, for example, much more problematic than it might be in other parts of the world.

We are considering all options that would allow Canada to continue to play a constructive role. As I said, we were among the first nations to respond with humanitarian assistance in August. We have increased that now. We are prepared to continue to increase that as conditions warrant. We would prefer to do that within the framework of existing international organizations.

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CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, the government has choked the CBC's budget in real terms and now, adding insult to injury, the government is rewarding one of its free trade friends with the pitiful patronage appointment of John Crispo to the CBC board of directors. It is just plain chutzpah.

Does the Deputy Prime Minister share the views of the appointee, John Crispo, that the CBC is, and I quote: "a lousy left-wing Liberal-NDP pinko network"? If that is the case, I understand what he has done. If not, will he withdraw Mr. Crispo's appointment immediately?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Crispo supports the CBC as an institution.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Weiner: Different people have different ideas about how the CBC should be run, but we all begin as supporters of the CBC. I think that is what is critical.

Here we have an individual, Mr. Crispo, an eminent economist. The CBC represents all Canadians and, therefore, it should reflect the great diversity of opinion that exists in this country.

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, this is the most gross appointment and you are certainly not supporting it. You are aborting the CBC.

Mr. Speaker: I know the hon. member would want to put her question through the Chair. Please put the question.

Mrs. Finestone: The CBC board gave a unanimous vote of confidence in the integrity of its news and its current affairs services, while the new appointee, John Crispo, calls it biased, left-wing and, to the journalists, a disgrace to professional journalism.

Is the Crispo appointment now the Prime Minister's way of censoring the CBC news or is this just another way that the government uses its cheap tricks, showing lofty contempt for the CBC?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Mr. Speaker, I was not sure if I heard a question. As far as I am concerned, the CBC has a significant budget to administer, with global receipts of some \$1.4 billion. There are other instruments by which funding has also been made available.

As far as I am concerned, I start my day by listening to the CBC, and I am a very strong supporter of that institution. I am not sure whether the member would want to get that involved in administering what should be a public corporation at arm's length and independent from the government.

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. Last week the Prime Minister appointed Uni-