

Oral Questions

Does the minister realize that indeed Poland needs food and more money now. Will the government ensure that food will reach Poland in time for Christmas? Will the government revisit the very modest offer to Poland of a possible \$20 million revolving credit to be negotiated within a very strict time frame and contingent upon an agreement with the International Monetary Fund?

• (1450)

Can we do better, and will we do better?

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Mr. Speaker, I suppose one of the realities of the parliamentary system is that any action the government takes will be described as too modest by the opposition. Even allowing that, there is no question that the needs of Poland, and indeed of Hungary, are very great. Canada participated very actively in the discussions flowing from the meeting with the Group of 7 in Paris. We have made an announcement of some of the aid that will be available from Canada, both financial aid and aid in expertise in other ways, and the question of rescheduling, as my colleague indicates.

The question is whether we are prepared to consider, along with the rest of the world, doing more. The answer of course is yes. We are prepared to consider that. We will be ensuring that the activities that Canada takes will be in conjunction with other countries interested in encouraging solid, permanent reforms in Poland.

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[Translation]

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr. Charles A. Langlois (Manicouagan): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the President of the Treasury Board. Employees of Correctional Service Canada have been on strike since October 30. I may add that they have had no wage increases since the end of 1986 and that their collective agreement expired in December 1987.

Mr. Speaker, this strike threatens the safety of employees who work in detention centres as well as the safety of inmates and the safety of the public, and it is particularly disturbing for Canadians and Members of this House who have detention centres in their ridings.

This morning, Mr. Speaker, we heard that the parties had resumed negotiations. Could the President of the Treasury Board inform the House today about what he intends to do to keep the parties at the negotiating table so that a settlement can be reached as soon as possible?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, as I said last Friday in the House, the government has always been willing to return to the negotiating table. In fact, following discussions we had with the unions, an agreement was reached to return to the table as of 2 p.m. today.

Mr. Speaker, I think concrete offers may be discussed at the negotiating table, and without wishing to prejudge events, I may say we are confident that the dispute, which has been going on for more than 10 days, will be settled in a matter of hours.

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[English]

VIA RAIL

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (York North): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. I would like to ask the minister about one tragic aspect of VIA Rail's cut-backs, the impact on Canada's disabled community.

The minister knows full well that many disabled Canadians have no other form of transportation. Buses are inaccessible, air travel is too expensive. I am sure that members opposite know about that. In the face of this, the minister lays off key personnel and cuts back services and routes.

Is this the response that the minister has to the transportation difficulties faced by Canada's disabled community?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, my colleague should know that we continue to provide services across the country, from Vancouver to Halifax. VIA Rail services will be provided, particularly in the corridor, with frequency where there are the most disabled people, and will be as accessible as in the past.

At the same time, the Department of Transport with the bus industry is investigating new buses and bus