

*Oral Questions*

Those who want to break this agreement are the people who will be responsible for the college being closed.

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• (1440)

[English]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence.

Military police notes from the Shidane Arone murder investigation indicate that the order to abuse Somali prisoners came from senior officers. Now Major Barry Armstrong, a senior medical officer with the unit, has revealed that on April 18, 1993 there was a general order at Belet Huen and he was ordered to destroy evidence, specifically all pictures of Somali patients. Major Armstrong says that some of these pictures still exist.

It has now been a year and a half since these events. Would the minister agree that since there are these continued allegations of cover-up at the highest level these allegations and this evidence should be turned over to a public inquiry?

**Hon. David Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the hon. member and members of the House that an inquiry was established by the previous government. However it was suspended once charges were laid against certain individuals.

The judicial process is currently ongoing, the court martials. There is one to go I believe in January or February. After the judicial process is complete I have said publicly that there will be a resumption of the inquiry. The terms of reference for that inquiry will be broad enough to answer any concern raised by members of the opposition about the individual in question who was a military officer and was involved.

With respect to the actual events surrounding the circumstances in Somalia, as I have said they are subject to judicial proceedings at the moment and, as I have said in the House before, it would be inappropriate for me to comment.

**Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question.

There is an additional allegation on March 4, 1993. Major Armstrong performed an autopsy on Mr. Ahmed Affrah Aresh, another unarmed Somali civilian who was shot in the back and killed execution style. No charges were ever laid and I am told there is no investigation proceeding on the matter.

Will the minister agree that this should be investigated? Will he also agree that the whole process of military justice in this

case should be submitted to an investigation? We have a corporal alone, sitting in jail, the man who provided the initial evidence for the investigation.

**Hon. David Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on the last point first, the military justice system has been upheld as constitutional by the Supreme Court of Canada.

On the second point with respect to the allegations made in print this morning, there are two police investigations ongoing. If the individual in question has evidence which he has a duty to report as a member of the armed forces, he should make that evidence available to the police authorities undertaking the investigation.

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[Translation]

**UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development. Wanting to look like Robin Hood, the Minister of Human Resources Development pretends that his reform will attack the wealthy unemployed so that more can be given to the poor, by taking from households earning over \$60,000 the right to collect unemployment insurance benefits while requiring them to continue to pay premiums.

Does the minister recognize that his proposed reform of unemployment insurance will force 2.6 million households earning over \$60,000 to pay UI premiums without being able to collect benefits?

[English]

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, again I remind the hon. member that the green paper is simply a series of proposals. There is no program; there is no policy. It is out for discussion. It is out for an important dialogue among Canadians.

When the hon. member speaks about the need to help those who are chronically unemployed, I point out that the whole purpose of the paper is to find ways in which we can get the resources to help those who have been unemployed for long periods of time, to get good literacy programs, to retrain, to help self-employment programs, and to develop a variety of ways to give them a chance to get back to a job. It is a way of trying to turn the safety net into a springboard. It gives an awful lot more opportunity and an awful lot more hope to those who have been unemployed.

That is the purpose of the green paper. It is a purpose that I think the hon. member should endorse.