

Oral Questions

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, there are two or three unrelated questions in that particular question. I will try and remember them. Dealing with the last one, on the NATO side I have just given an answer to the Leader of the Opposition and I do not know what further statement he needs beyond that.

In so far as the position I took in New York on disarmament is concerned, I would point out to the Leader of the Opposition that it is contained in the white paper on defence policy that we made public in 1971. The Leader of the Opposition's predecessor would perhaps be able to hand him his copy, and he could see what was stated in it.

In so far as the Paris conference is concerned we have not been invited and we have not sought to be invited. As far as I am concerned, there is no need to be invited. We are involved in Africa in very constructive ways. The Secretary of State for External Affairs answered questions in this House the other week about our role in Namibia. The House knows that the preference of this government is to be involved in peaceful pursuits in Africa and in establishing political and social conditions on that continent which will create better conditions and prevent destabilization, rather than to come in after and try to correct the situation once it has been destabilized.

● (1422)

Mr. Clark: Again in the interests of clarification, is it the intention of the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada to break the practice of previous governments and, indeed, to break the practice of the previous secretary of state for external affairs, and to exclude parliament from the opportunity to discuss these undertakings or policies that Canada adopts internationally; or, instead, will the Prime Minister follow the practice and his responsibilities and report to the House of Commons, in a statement on motions, the decisions to which he has been party during the last few days in the United States?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, as the Secretary of State for External Affairs answered last week in the House, he has appeared before standing committees of this House and answered all questions and discussed all issues put to him. The opposition apparently was not interested in asking questions on the particular subject that the Leader of the Opposition discovered over the weekend. As far as I am concerned, I am happy to answer each and every question put to me by the opposition. I see no need for a statement, Mr. Speaker. I doubt whether the Leader of the Opposition really sees a need for a statement: he would then have to hand the floor over to one of his members to learn what his policy is on defence.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

CANADIAN APPROACH TO AFRICAN QUESTION

Mr. Douglas Roche (Edmonton-Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. I think it should be made clear right away that at the

[Mr. Clark.]

last external affairs committee meeting neither the minister nor his undersecretary came to answer questions.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roche: Returning to the question of Canada's non-involvement in the Paris Conference for African Security, I ask the minister why it is that Canada is involved in presenting the western proposal for Namibian independence, Canada is involved in trade sanctions against South Africa, and yet we are not involved and the Prime Minister is casting disdain on the security conference, which is brought about by the presence of 40,000 Cuban troops which is severely threatening security in Africa. I wish to know what standard the government applies to the security conference and is it, in fact, a double standard that we have in Africa?

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, since there has been some comment, perhaps I can be permitted to say that I will go back to the committee at any time. The hon. member knows that. If he would like to set it up for any time in the next month, or as long as we will be here, I will be glad to do it.

An hon. Member: Next week?

Mr. Jamieson: Next week is fine with me. I think it is important, in answering the hon. member, to make the point at the beginning that the question with regard to the conference on Zaire, if that is an appropriate name for it, and Canada's involvement in it stems from an error which was made in Paris and since has been corrected. The question stemmed from a totally false comment made by the Quai d'Orsay which they have conceded since was in error, saying in fact that we had been invited. We were never asked to involve ourselves in the first place.

It has also been described as a security conference by the hon. member. It is a quite informal grouping of Belgium, France, I believe, the United States and perhaps the United Kingdom, on the basis of asking what can be done with regard to their nationals in Zaire, and also with regard to the very specific investments which they have in that country. It is very informal. It is not being held under the auspices of any international organization. If it were held under the United Nations, then perhaps we might have been involved as members of the Security Council. It is exploratory.

Following the meetings which are to be held in Europe next week, it is conceivable that a more formal conference will be held. However, at the moment it is just a matter of these countries getting together to discuss their particular interests. As the Prime Minister has said, there is no real reason at this moment why we should seek to be involved. Indeed, it would be rather difficult to see what kind of contribution we could make in that particular situation at the moment.

Mr. Roche: Mr. Speaker, once again the government and this minister in particular have sidestepped the question of Cuban involvement in Africa which is such a serious threat to security in that country. If Canada will not take an interest in