

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

SALE OF ARMAMENTS MANUFACTURED BY SPACE RESEARCH CORPORATION

Mr. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): Mr. Speaker, may I put a question to the Minister of National Defence with respect to the Space Research Corporation, a Canadian company which, as the minister knows, has been assisted to the tune of millions of dollars by the Canadian taxpayers and whose activities have been the subject of an investigatory TV program and recent action by the government of Barbados as well as that of Antigua?

I ask the minister if he can be absolutely satisfied that the armaments manufactured by Space Research Corporation have remained in the countries to which Canada issued end-user certificates, and whether it is possible that any of these armaments could have been transshipped to other countries?

Hon. Barney Danson (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member knows that is not in my area of responsibility. I understand an investigation is being made. I do not know if the appropriate minister has an answer to that question at this time. I cannot answer the question.

Mr. MacKay: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I gather that the Solicitor General is not in his place at the moment. I should like to remind the minister that he knows inquiries have been made of him in the past. I would ask him if he would give the House his assurance that he will investigate this matter, talk to the RCMP officers involved in the investigation, or have the Solicitor General do so and find out once and for all whether armaments that are being shipped from this country to countries where Canada has offered or given an end-user certificate are being warehoused and transshipped elsewhere? I think he owes the House this kind of explanation.

Mr. Danson: Mr. Speaker, if I were the minister responsible, I would owe the House this sort of response; but I am not the minister responsible. I am sure the minister responsible will answer as he responded in the House the other day without any conclusive information, as I understand. As the Solicitor General is now in the House, the hon. member may wish to redirect the question to him. If he would start from scratch, the Solicitor General could hear it.

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PENITENTIARIES

REHABILITATION PROGRAM FOR INMATES

Mr. J. P. Nowlan (Annapolis Valley): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Solicitor General, but it is on another matter. I should like to ask the minister if there has been any change in the policy and purpose of the Penitentiary Service; that is, not only to protect the public and impose punishment but also to provide help for rehabilitation.

Oral Questions

I ask that question in light of the fact that in part of this restraint program consideration is being given to reducing by 50 per cent the chaplaincy service in the major institutions. Could the minister reassure the House that the purpose of the Penitentiary Service is still threefold, and that requests by somebody to reduce the chaplaincy service in many institutions, removing either the Roman Catholic or the Protestant chaplain—who by historic tradition have been in most of them—will not be proceeded with, in view of the fact that so many estimates for publication have been increased in the Penitentiary Service?

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his representation. I fully agree with him. He knows, as hon. members of the House know, that there is, as a result of restraints, a cutback in terms of total staff and in some areas, some of the chaplaincy has been affected, but not as a result of any concentration in terms of the chaplains themselves.

We have made every attempt to encourage representatives of the chaplaincy to communicate and consult with us in order to make sure there is a proper chaplaincy effort within the Penitentiary Service. I assure the hon. gentleman that it is an activity I am paying close attention to, for the reasons he has outlined.

Mr. Nowlan: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I would have given the minister notice, but this matter came to my attention over the weekend. As I left my church, someone very active in the chaplaincy service approached me. I must say I was rather startled with the information I received.

I understand that the minister or the commissioner of the Penitentiary Service is meeting with the Interfaith Committee on Wednesday or Thursday. Contrary to part of the answer of the minister, it is my information that over 50 per cent of the chaplains and/or the positions in the major institutions are being eliminated—either not being filled, or those that are filled are going to be cut back. This will distort the religious service that has been given to the inmates, and in the province of Quebec it will even distort the service given by Francophone and Anglophone chaplains to the inmate population. In that sense, it will have a very adverse effect on this rehabilitation program.

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the Interfaith Committee will be comforted in the sense that they will see that the information, or the scuttlebutt we have been hearing is not accurate. Regarding the Protestant chaplains in the province of Quebec, the situation is that there are only about 170 Protestant inmates in Quebec so, in effect, we have a surplus of Protestant chaplains in that province. Therefore, there may be a reduction that approaches the figure which the hon. member describes. I am sure he understands the motivation for the reduction in this instance.