

Oral Questions

Canadian long distance telephone conversations are being monitored by the Russians. Can the minister indicate the result of that investigation? Also, can the minister advise specifically whether he has been able to determine whether the Russians have ground monitoring stations, such as those allegedly contained in the United States in Russian consulates and the Russian embassy in Washington?

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Pelletier (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I am unable to answer the second part of the hon. member's question on which I have no information. As for the first part, the government has been aware for a long time, much before the publication of the articles he alluded to, that telephone communications can be monitored because hertzian beams or microwave networks are used on some transmission lines. Because of that danger, of which the government is aware, recommendations are made to all those who have to transmit or receive so-called "classified" information against the use of the telephone to that end. When it is absolutely necessary to use the telephone, as it is in some cases, especially to convey information pertaining to our defence agreements with our allies, very costly equipment is used to code the information at one end and decode it at the other. The Department of Communications is also very much aware of the danger and always requires that the microwave networks are located in such geographical areas as can best be protected against that type of danger. However, I must say to the hon. member that, in view of the present state of science, we will have to wait for the development of communications by optical fiber, or by laser beam, to do away completely with the danger to which he alludes.

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[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**ALLEGED MONITORING OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS BY RUSSIANS—GOVERNMENT ACTION TO PROTECT CITIZENS**

Mr. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct my supplementary to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. The Rockefeller commission in the United States which looked into the problem of Russian monitoring of long distance telephone calls by private citizens concluded, and I quote:

This raises the real spectre that selected American users of telephones are potentially subject to blackmail that can seriously affect their actions, or even lead in some cases to recruitment as espionage agents.

What action is being taken by the government to ensure that telephone conversations are not being monitored by the Russians and what protection is there to individual citizens which will ensure they are not blackmailed by the Russians as a result of their long distance telephone calls?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the comments that the hon. members refers to are based on speculative reports and speculative news stories. I do not propose to respond on this subject on the basis of speculation.

[Mr. Beatty.]

AGRICULTURE**UNITED STATES QUOTAS ON BEEF—GOVERNMENT POLICY FOLLOWING EXPIRY OF QUOTAS**

Mr. Joe Clark (Rocky Mountain): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. Since negotiations commenced in Washington more than a week ago, and since we will soon be facing the anniversary of the global quotas affecting exports of Canadian beef, what will the federal policy be with regard to support prices or border quotas for Canadian beef after August 11 when the present quotas expire?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I said I would announce before August 12 what the decision or position will be by August 12, and I will do that.

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CANADIAN PACIFIC**REDUCTION OF TRAIN CREWS—GOVERNMENT ACTION**

Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Transport. Will the minister order Canadian Pacific Railways to stop the current practice of reducing main line and yard railway crews by one brakeman, especially in light of the fact that Mr. Justice Hall has not yet reported to the government on the size of train crews?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I will inquire about those facts and give the hon. member an answer.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**IMPRISONMENT OF MISSIONARIES NORMAN AND JOAN JOHNSON IN VIET NAM—REQUEST FOR REPORT ON EFFORTS TO SECURE RELEASE**

Mr. Sean O'Sullivan (Hamilton-Wentworth): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs with regard to the case of Canadian missionaries Norman and Joan Johnson. Can the minister report any progress in securing the release of these Canadian missionaries from Viet Nam?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I advised the hon. member just a few days ago that I had taken additional action in the way of once again drawing this case to the attention of the PRG authorities. I have no information to depart today.