

Oral Questions

the Prime Minister of this country that Parliament and the people of Canada are extremely concerned about the actions announced by the French.

Will the Prime Minister enter discussions with the leadership of France while he is at the Venice conference? Later today the Deputy Prime Minister can report to the House on the context of that conversation.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, while I appreciate the Hon. Member's suggestion I am sure he understands that that is not necessary. The Prime Minister of Canada considers this to be a very important initiative. I do not think he needs any prompting from the Hon. Member or me to do what is in the best interests of Canada.

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CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

ALLOWANCES PAID TO PERSONNEL IN EUROPE

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, while the Ministers are out selling their budget for National Defence, the growth of which has been reduced over 15 years, to the Canadian people, I will direct my question to the President of the Treasury Board to whom the buck was passed yesterday by the Acting Minister.

The Government continues to treat members of the Canadian Armed Forces shabbily. First it was an attack on retirees by taking away their unemployment insurance. Now it is attacking members of the Armed Forces in Europe by cutting their cost of living pay and their exchange rate pay.

In light of the protests from Canadian Forces in Europe will the Minister undertake to review this issue by sending Statistics Canada back to the drawing board to make a more accurate assessment of living costs and exchange rates in Canada? Never mind the system. The Government can do it if it has the will to do it and if it cares for Canadian Armed Forces personnel.

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the Hon. Member that this Government is the first Government in many years to stand by our Armed Forces and ensure that they are well treated, well equipped, and able to do the job.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. de Cotret: Mr. Speaker, as the Hon. Member knows, an index has been developed to equate the standard of living on posts abroad to that in the national capital region. That index is revised periodically. It has been a longstanding practice and has been applied at this time as in other periods.

Mr. Hopkins: Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board has chosen to use the same old inaccurate rhetoric about

defence spending. That story will be laid wide open. I hope he is ready for an education.

EXCHANGE RATES—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, the Royal Canadian Dragoons and other units will be coming home from Germany this summer and the 8th Hussars and others will be replacing them. My question for the Minister is serious and I do not want an answer about your system. Will the Government correct this injustice with exchange rates and cost of living in Europe, or will he treat the people who are going there this summer in the same shabby manner as he was treating those who are coming home? Will the Minister withdraw his order of May 1 when he took 15 per cent of their pay package away from those personnel and give it back to them? That is the question, and a serious one.

● (1450)

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, we are treating our personnel abroad, whether they are in the Armed Forces or the foreign service, in an equitable and decent manner. If the Hon. Member really believes that the methodology of the survey is faulty, I will be happy to look into it and ensure that the system is working in an equitable way so that people are paid on an equitable basis, whether they be in Germany or anywhere else in the world.

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TRADE

IMPORTATION OF MILK PRODUCTS

Mr. Ross Belsher (Fraser Valley East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister for International Trade.

In the area of multilateral trade last year the Government took decisive action to limit the importation of dry blends of products containing 50 per cent or more milk solids. Since there has been some evidence recently that some importers may be importing mixtures with slightly less than the 50 per cent limit of milk solids, what action has been or will be taken to stop this apparent disrespect of the intent of the import control list?

Hon. Pat Carney (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I can advise the Hon. Member that my Department is working very closely with the Department of National Revenue on this alleged skimmed milk scam. The allegations are that skimmed milk mixed with salt is being imported into the country as soup mix, in contravention of the Export and Import Permits Act.

I want to assure the Hon. Member that investigations are continuing. There has been a seizure of skimmed milk as a result of them. There has been increased vigilance at the ports of entry to ensure that no such contraventions occur.