

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*PRIME MINISTER'S DISCUSSIONS WITH UNITED STATES
PRESIDENT

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, our Prime Minister is deliberately trying to avoid revealing the substance of conversations and talks between him and the President of the United States.

Has he perhaps agreed to remain silent on world affairs until he gets an affirmative vote before the U.S. Senate?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the suggestion is unworthy and odious.

[English]

CANADIAN LUMBER EXPORTS

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister refused to participate in a recent debate. We wonder about the reason for his silence. In the same letter addressed to American Senators, the President also said that he was committed to the resolution of the lumber issue, obviously on the American side, and the U.S. trade representative wrote Arkansas Senator Pryor the following:

Dave, we'll get timber fixed.

Has the Canadian Government conveyed to the President or the U.S. trade representative the intention that lumber will be fixed? Have we got ourselves into a position in which the Prime Minister is really in the President's back pocket?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition goes from one elegant point to another. The fact of the matter is that, as with all Canadian Governments, we have conducted the affairs of this country in the national interest at all times and in all circumstances.

This initiative is under way in the United States. We do not know how it will end. It is designed to benefit Canada, to create new jobs, to lower the unemployment rate, and to bring new prosperity and opportunities to Canadians. We have always said that a good deal for Canada is a fair deal for our partners, and if it is good for us it has to be good for them. That is the way we view life, and we think that is the way to view it.

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IMMIGRATION

RUSSIAN ARMY DEFECTORS IN AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs and concerns

the six Soviet army defectors who are presently in Afghanistan. Today I received confirmation that the publisher of the Kingston *Whig-Standard*, as a result of yesterday's exchange in the House, has been in touch with the Minister to release confidential and important details on this very sensitive matter. Can the Minister confirm that discussion with the publisher? When will he meet with Mr. Davies? Can he assure the House that, with that information, he will immediately instruct his officials to travel to Afghanistan in order to give freedom to those six courageous young men?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, over the last several months the Government of Canada has taken a number of steps to secure the release of those six, including relaxing all of the health and security criteria that we normally require. In answer to questions in the House yesterday, I indicated that we would be prepared to discuss with journalists involved any co-operation which might bring those six Soviets to Canada.

I can confirm that, at my initiative, I have spoken today with the editor, not the publisher, of the Kingston *Whig-Standard*, and that we are examining some actions which might bring these six prisoners of war to freedom in Canada. I am prepared to brief privately a member of each of the opposition Parties on the nature of those arrangements, but I believe that further public discussion of this issue might jeopardize the success of the initiative we are pursuing.

OPPRESSED PRISONERS' PERMIT PROGRAM

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister for his projected consultations. However, yesterday he said that there was no instrument that could be used to bring those individuals here. Why did the Government not choose to exercise the Oppressed Prisoners' Permit Program established in 1982, a program that would allow those individuals speedy passage to Canada and would see that processing would be done on this side of the border? Canadian officials from the Minister's Department still wish to give urine tests to these six individuals in Pakistan. That is unfair. Will the Minister bring them here and process them from here?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the problem is not on this side of the border. That is the difficulty. What I have just indicated to the House is that I had discussions which I think might yield the release to freedom in Canada of those six Soviet prisoners of war. Certainly that is what I want. Certainly that is what the Government wants. Certainly it is clear that that is what the editor and the journalists of the Kingston *Whig-Standard* want. We are prepared to work together. I trust we will have the co-operation of the House of Commons in trying to bring those six Soviet prisoners of war to freedom in Canada.