

Oral Questions

has sought the assistance of our friends to have this issue placed on the agenda of the cultural and technical organization which will hold its annual conference in Lomé on December 10?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, we have begun to discuss the matter with the Francophone countries and we are waiting for their reply.

INQUIRY WHETHER GOVERNMENT HAS MADE ASSESSMENT OF
IRANIAN DEBT TO CANADA

Mr. Charles Lapointe (Charlevoix): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a supplementary question on the Iranian crisis. Since the Iranian foreign affairs minister announced Friday last that some foreign debts, were now cancelled by the new Iranian state, could the Secretary of State for External Affairs tell us today whether she has assessed the Iranian debt in Canada which Iran wishes to cancel?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I cannot reply specifically to the hon. member because the Iranian state secretary for foreign affairs said that this measure was taken solely against the United States. Representatives of the Iranian central bank also say that such a measure would not be taken against the United States nor any other country.

POSSIBILITY OF CONVENING SPECIAL MEETING OF
COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Irénée Pelletier (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister and it is supplementary to that of the hon. member for Cape Breton Highlands-Canso. It is indeed unusual for the Secretary General of the United Nations to convene the Security Council. Realizing that the crisis is worsening from day to day, is the Prime Minister himself prepared to ask the Commonwealth countries Secretary General to convene a special meeting of Commonwealth countries as soon as possible?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, that is something we have already done. The High Commissioners of all Commonwealth countries represented in London are meeting today in that city. This meeting was convened by the Mauritian High Commissioner, but was actually suggested by Canada. During the meeting, we intend to propose, through our Secretary General, that it would be valid for all Commonwealth countries to voice their common position concerning the situation in Iran.

[Mr. Lapointe.]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION

INQUIRY WHETHER SUBSIDY GRANTED TO SOQUEM FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SALT MINE IN ÎLES-DE-LA-MADELEINE

Mr. Rémi Bujold (Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion and relates to a report published in last Friday's *La Presse* which states, and I quote:

—the Department of Regional Economic Expansion . . . will grant a subsidy of several million dollars to the Société québécoise d'exploration minière—

—to develop the salt mine in the Magdalen Islands. The article also mentions that the minister was to meet this morning with his Quebec colleague, Jacques Léonard. Can the minister tell us whether this report is factual and whether his department did grant a subsidy to SOQUEM; if not, can the minister indicate whether during the morning's meeting, if it indeed took place, someone tried to convince him to grant Quebec the subsidy and, if so, when does he intend to make an announcement?

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, I discussed this topic today with Mr. Jacques Léonard, my Quebec counterpart.

[*English*]

I am still not convinced that we should make an official announcement on this matter which continues to occupy a great deal of our attention in our department. I hope that before long there will be something we can announce one way or another.

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[*Translation*]

SOCIAL SECURITY

INQUIRY WHETHER ALL PENSIONS AND SUPPLEMENTS WILL ENSURE INCOMES ABOVE POVERTY LINE

Hon. Monique Bégin (Saint-Léonard-Anjou): Mr. Speaker, since the very wise and very moderate—I would even be tempted to say “very conservative”—Economic Council of Canada released today its report on pensions for Canadians, in the absence of the Minister of National Health and Welfare I would like to ask my question of the acting minister in charge of social development.

I would like to ask him if the government intends to translate recommendation No. 1 into governmental policy, namely, that all pensions and pension income supplements should provide Canadians with an income above the poverty line.

● (1500)

[*English*]

Hon. David MacDonald (Secretary of State and Minister of Communications): As the hon. member knows, Mr. Speaker, a number of important studies have been produced. This is