

Oral Questions

himself and undoubtedly he will have some comment to make at the time of the presentation of the budget.

● (1420)

Mr. Stevens: The Acting Minister of Finance has indicated that subsidization is at least part of the government's thinking. Bearing in mind that current interest rates on mortgages in the United States are running at approximately 8.5 per cent whereas in Canada even the NHA rate is more than 10.5 per cent, will the minister tell us whether the government has any plan in mind to subsidize interest rates on behalf of borrowers in Canada?

Mr. Drury: The government would be remiss if it did not explore all possibilities including some which have been suggested and which, on the face of it, appear to be rather impracticable. We are engaged in this assessment and given the usual practice of governments in Canada not to announcing budgetary plans and intentions prior to the presentation of the budget, the hon. member will have to be patient.

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HARBOURS**MONTREAL—ABILITY OF MARITIME EMPLOYERS' ASSOCIATION TO MEET LOAN COMMITMENTS**

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Mr. Speaker, my question is intended for the Minister of Labour but in his absence perhaps I might direct it to the Minister of Transport or the Acting Prime Minister. It relates to the government's guarantee of certain loans secured by the Maritime Employers' Association in respect of programs initiated at Montreal, Trois-Rivières and Quebec. Can the Minister of Transport tell us whether there have been any discussions between his department—perhaps the Acting Prime Minister will deal with that aspect—between the government and the Maritime Employers' Association with respect to the ability of the MEA to meet its commitments to the two principal banks where these loans have been secured and in respect of which the government has given certain guarantees?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): The question has been addressed to me: I will have to take it as notice and give an answer tomorrow.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**VIET NAM—NUMBER OF CANADIANS REMAINING AND GOVERNMENT MEASURES TO ENSURE SAFETY—RECOGNITION OF NEW REGIME**

Mr. Claude Wagner (Saint-Hyacinthe): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Now that the war in Viet Nam has ended, will the hon. gentleman tell the House how many Canadians, including media men, embassy staff, missionaries and aid officials are still in South Viet Nam? How many Vietnamese relatives granted Canadian visas are

[Mr. Drury.]

still there and what measures is the government taking to ensure the safety of these Canadians and relatives?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): The information I have is a day or so old and possibly out of date, but on April 24 there were known to be 31 Canadians still in Saigon. This group included a number of journalists and a number of Canadians who planned to leave within a short time. There were 13 Canadians who intended to remain in the country indefinitely, and of these 13, 11 were missionaries. With respect to their safety, it is probable that the territory in which they live is now under PRG control. The PRG has stated that once these foreigners are identified they will be allowed to leave the country if they wish. My hon. friend knows that all Canadians who were in the area were repeatedly warned and given an opportunity to leave before the events culminated yesterday.

Mr. Wagner: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Would the minister tell the House whether the government plans to recognize the new regime in South Viet Nam, and when?

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, it is really not yet clear exactly who the new regime is. Once it becomes clear, then there will be an opportunity for the government to decide what action to take. But it is much too early to know exactly what the political situation is to justify recognition.

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IMMIGRATION**POSSIBILITY OF GRANTING REFUGEE STATUS TO VIETNAMESE IN UNITED STATES CAMPS—GOVERNMENT POSITION**

Mr. Douglas Roche (Edmonton-Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Manpower and Immigration. Would the minister grant refugee status to some of the thousands of Vietnamese who are now in camps in U.S. staging areas in the Pacific and permit them to come to Canada and, if so, how many?

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, my current information, which is still somewhat obscure obviously because of the situation, indicates that between 50 and 100 relatives of Canadians who will sponsor them may have reached Guam. Some others are apparently showing up in places like Bangkok. We are in communication with the Americans in order to get the most current information as to names of people who are on the list that we supplied to them, and I think that later this day, and certainly later this week, we will have a clearer picture and will be proceeding with all reasonable measures to clear their passage to Canada.

With regard to people from Viet Nam who are not relatives but might be claiming refugee status, we will deal with these, as I said the other day, on an individual basis. We have been in touch with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, but there has been no declaration or decision by that agency to declare a mass