

raid was organized by either the Quebec provincial police or the Montreal police, and the RCMP assumed an assisting role. However, we are getting as much information as we can, and we will announce further action in the House as soon as that information is available.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

PERSON ORDERING EMBASSY AT BEIRUT CLOSED—COUNTRY RESPONSIBLE FOR CANADIAN CONSULAR SERVICES

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, if I can have his attention. On the assumption that the news reports about the departure of embassy staff from Beirut is correct, will the minister say whether it was he who ordered the closing of the embassy in Beirut or whether the action was taken by the chargé d'affaires on his own initiative? If the latter is the case the minister must surely know the grounds on which it was done, because it occurs to me that while there are Canadians still in the area, the mission should be maintained.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sullivan, the chargé d'affaires, and I agreed that it was appropriate at this particular time to withdraw the embassy staff. In fact, at a certain point I had given instructions that that decision should be taken at his discretion based on an assessment of the situation. Subsequently, I felt that I ought to give a direct instruction, with which the chargé agreed.

The reason for the temporary withdrawal of staff is that, because of the deteriorated political situation, the embassy could not carry out any of its functions. It was virtually non-operational, as the lives of the embassy staff were in some danger. It seemed to me useless to maintain them in the area when they could not perform any function whatsoever.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Would the minister then say what arrangements have been made to ensure that consular services continue to be available to Canadian citizens who are in the area? Has he handed them over to the Swiss authorities on this occasion as in the past?

Mr. MacEachen: We have been urging Canadians in Lebanon to leave the country. We felt that advisable for some time and have urged them to do that, in their own interests. Whatever consular services are required will be provided, I believe, to Canadians by the British embassy.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Chicken! Shame.

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FINANCE

REQUEST FOR DETAILS OF PROPOSALS TO ASSIST ATLANTIC PROVINCES WITH ENERGY COSTS

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. It relates to the answer of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources yesterday

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in which he indicated that with respect to the high cost of electricity for Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island in particular, a number of proposals were still before the provinces and that some of these were still on the table. I wonder if the Minister of Finance could indicate, with respect to tomorrow's meeting with provincial ministers of finance, whether some of these proposals have been developed to the point of proposing in dollar terms to the provincial governments what forms of assistance might be provided by the federal government, and has there been any distinguishing between short-term or interim measures and long-term measures, realizing the length of time it would take to bring in some of the proposals originally suggested?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the proposals which had been put to the provinces were proposals to be operative over a longer period for the purpose of making lower cost hydro or nuclear-based power available, and indeed, the province of Prince Edward Island has gone ahead on one of these programs to set up a cable link with the mainland for this purpose.

As to the question of short-run financing of the two power utilities in those two provinces, we look forward to hearing from the ministers for those provinces. Of course, there is the difficulty that in other parts of Canada energy users, such as natural gas users on the natural gas pipeline system, also have had substantial increases and as Minister of Finance I would have to confess to being most reluctant to get into a large national subsidy program for energy users in general.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): In light of the final comments of the minister, I wonder whether he could indicate whether the federal government has taken a position, or will indicate one tomorrow, with respect to the extent of the differential which will be allowed to exist, in view of its other programs attempting to equalize the hardship created. Realizing that both Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island have the highest electrical cost in the country, will the minister be prepared to put forward a statement with respect to the differentiation the federal government will tolerate?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): I take it the hon. member means between energy rates in general and the two provinces in particular. I am not planning on making a statement of that kind, although I hope to have a very full review from the two ministers of their current situation and to get a reaction from ministers of other provinces with regard to whether national funds should be used in this way.

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SOCIAL SECURITY

NEGOTIATIONS WITH UNITED KINGDOM ON BEHALF OF OLD AGE PENSION RECIPIENTS RESIDING IN CANADA—REQUEST FOR REPORT

Mr. Gilbert Parent (St. Catharines): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. In view of the fact that there are a number of British citizens living in Canada who receive the equivalent of an