

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS OF SOVIET CITIZENS—REQUEST
QUESTION BE RAISED AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE—
MOTION UNDER S.O. 43

Mr. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a matter of urgent and pressing necessity, pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 43. I move, seconded by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker):

In light of the offer of the Government of Canada to grant immediate landed immigrant status to Anatoly Shcharansky, and recognizing that the Soviet Union has not yet positively responded to this initiative, this House wishes to express its deep disappointment as well as its concern respecting the treatment of Soviet citizens who have attempted to exercise their rights and freedoms as embodied in the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and agreed to by participating states at Helsinki and, further, this House asks that parliament's concern on this vital issue be raised at the earliest opportunity at the Belgrade meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe now under way.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Such a motion, pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 43, can be presented to the House only if there is unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1417)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

PENITENTIARIES

HOSTAGE-TAKING—INQUIRY INTO RECENT INCIDENTS

Mr. Bill Jarvis (Perth-Wilmot): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Solicitor General, who shocked the House yesterday when he said, in response to a question by the hon. member for Surrey-White Rock, that he was not prepared to reconstitute the subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs which deals with penitentiary matters. In case this was another instance of the minister taking a position too hastily, I want to give him an opportunity to extricate himself.

In view of the fact that the subcommittee did its work with integrity and in a non-partisan way, and that it presented the House with a unanimous report, will the minister reconsider the attitude he took yesterday and accept recommendation No. 65 which asks that the subcommittee be reconstituted for this parliament? Specifically, will the hon. gentleman permit that

Oral Questions

subcommittee to participate in the inquiries which are taking place or which are about to take place into the two most recent hostage-taking incidents?

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Solicitor General): First, may I point out that I was replying to a question by the hon. member for Surrey-White Rock which referred specifically to the hostage-taking incident in British Columbia. I have stated, with respect to that incident, it was my intention to request the appointment of a formal inquiry. The precise form the inquiry will take will be decided upon in a day or two. I did not think it was necessary to reconstitute the subcommittee for that purpose. However, I am the first to agree the subcommittee has done excellent work, and I do not use those words loosely. It has done marvellous work in terms of the reference made to it. We are investigating its report and all the recommendations which were made, including recommendation No. 65. I shall have a statement to make on that recommendation on a subsequent occasion.

Mr. Jarvis: The Solicitor General and his predecessor have had eight or nine months in which to consider those unanimous recommendations. Does the hon. gentleman intend to continue the policy of his predecessor, that the recommendations forming the heart and soul of the report will not be implemented immediately, without further consideration, since ample time has now been given to the minister and his predecessor?

Mr. Blais: The hon. member underestimates the value and, indeed, the logical sequence of the recommendations which were made. If he recognized their importance and the seriousness with which they are being considered, he would recognize, also, that they require considerable analysis—

Mr. Jarvis: Eight or nine months?

Mr. Blais: —in order that they may be implemented. I might add that I am in contact with the chairman of the subcommittee in order to accelerate the process of implementation of the recommendations.

Mr. Jarvis: What the minister underestimates are the murders, hostage-taking incidents and injuries which are continually occurring in Canadian penitentiaries.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jarvis: I ask him again: Will he, first of all, implement these unanimous recommendations with dispatch, and will he with equal dispatch reconstitute the subcommittee?

Mr. Blais: I think I have replied to both those questions quite honestly and quite openly.

Mr. McGrath: And quite negatively.