

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Minister of National Defence):** Madam Speaker, when the unification task force presented its report, I said at the time that one of its recommendations had already been implemented, namely the one to include in the defence council the three commanders of the armed forces, that of the army, the air force and the navy. This is a recommendation that we had already accepted. As for the other allegations that the hon. member has just made, I would say that they do not necessarily reflect what I said. I do not recall ever having said that this report was not important, but I did say that the other recommendations should be re-evaluated since the report made no mention of the cost of implementation or non-implementation of these recommendations. When the task force that I have established to re-evaluate this whole issue has made its report, a decision will be made. However, I would not want to express any opinion at this time before those who are now examining the report now so that they can express their own views.

● (1500)

[English]

**Mr. Howie:** A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. Given that one of the stated objectives of the Liberal government of the day which forced the unified system on the Canadian forces was to cut back on the high number of senior officers caused by the triplication of posts on account of having three services, could the minister explain to the House why in 1969, prior to unification, there were 109 serving generals for a total force of 100,000 men, while in 1979 there were 108 generals for a force of 79,000 men and women?

[Translation]

**Mr. Lamontagne:** Madam Speaker, I think it is rather difficult to compare the pre-unified system with the present unified system because nowadays all major generals, lieutenant generals and brigadier generals are known as generals. In the past, for example, we had air marshals, admirals and generals, a completely different system. At that time, I think we had as many generals, marshals or admirals as we have today, if not more, because the qualifications and the evaluation were not the same.

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[English]

**NORTHERN PIPELINES**

NEGOTIATIONS WITH U.S. ON ALASKA HIGHWAY NATURAL GAS PIPELINE

**Mr. Gary F. McCauley (Moncton):** Madam Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Given conflicting reports on the progress of negotiations concerning the Alaska Highway natural gas pipeline, can the minister clarify the position of the United States government, in light of the apparently encouraging reports

emanating from the minister's discussions with the United States officials in Venice?

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources):** Madam Speaker, I had the advantage of extensive discussions with the Secretary of Energy for the United States during the Summit. We had a lengthy exploration of improvements that should be made in the position of the United States and also clarification of their position. We stated very clearly our view as a government speaking for the people of Canada.

I expect an answer from the United States Secretary of Energy within the next few days. In particular, we made it plain that we want a very clear indication from the United States government and the United States Congress that they are still in full support of building the full Alaska gas pipeline.

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**EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

VENICE SUMMIT—WITHDRAWAL OF SOVIET TROOPS FROM AFGHANISTAN

**Mr. Stan Darling (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** Madam Speaker, I should like to address my question to the Minister of National Defence. Reports from Venice indicate that the Prime Minister supported the Summit demand for a total withdrawal of Russian troops from Afghanistan. We are pleased to see such a show of unity.

Could the minister tell us if he believes the government's aims in this regard are helped at all when two Canadian parliamentary delegates to a NATO meeting in Luxembourg two weeks ago abstained from voting on a resolution condemning the Russian invasion?

[Translation]

**Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Minister of National Defence):** Madam Speaker, I know that. I think that two members of that committee abstained from voting. I would not say that they voted against the resolution, but they wanted to maintain a personal opinion.

If the hon. member wants to know what I think of the meeting which took place in Venice or what is my perception of the international situation at the moment, he simply has to read the article published in yesterday's edition of the *Journal*.

[English]

**Mr. Darling:** A supplementary question. One of the abstainers, Senator Frith, is a Liberal and by his abstention indicated to our allies that the Liberal party which happens to be in power at the present time—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The question, please.

**Mr. Darling:** Can the minister give us any assurance that Liberal delegates will not embarrass us in future by going against government and Canadian policy?