

Oral Questions

provincial counterparts personally, and fairly soon, to clarify their situation in the trade talks with the United States?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I did not attack the provincial premiers last week. I invited them to eliminate trade barriers at the national and interprovincial levels.

In fact, I was more or less going back to what Premier Peterson said at the First Ministers' Conference in Halifax, where he stated, and rightly so, that the provinces had an obligation to take the initiative in eliminating trade barriers between the provinces and between individuals here in Canada.

I therefore insisted on this phrase when I asked the provinces to make this unilateral gesture before trade talks with the Americans or at the GATT level. And I think it would be a good thing for the Canadian people.

[English]

REQUEST FOR PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, because these negotiations are going on behind closed doors between our Government and the United States and the federal Government *vis-à-vis* the provinces, would the Prime Minister consult with his colleague, the Government House Leader, so that we could have an early full parliamentary debate on the whole state of play with respect to these negotiations with the United States?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mulroney: I will wait for the applause to die down.

An Hon. Member: The scattered applause.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I will talk to the Government House Leader as soon as I see him and put in a word for an Opposition Day on this important subject.

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IMMIGRATION

RUSSIAN ARMY DEFECTORS IN AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Employment and Immigration I will direct my question to the Minister of State for External Affairs. It concerns the fate of six Soviets who defected and who are now prisoners of war in Afghanistan. In October, 1984, the Conservative Government agreed to and authorized a rescue mission which was shamefully bungled and then subsequently cancelled, thus placing their lives in greater jeopardy. Why was this mission allowed to be so mismanaged? And who in the Government, after granting the approval, called the shot to abort the mission?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, let me thank the Hon. Member for his welcome back to the House of Commons. I have seen the news reports in the *Montreal Gazette*. I will not comment on all of them. I will just talk about the facts. The facts are that the Government of Canada has been working very vigorously, using every national and international instrument at our disposal, to try to come to the aid of those individuals.

If the people cited in the article in the *Montreal Gazette* have a line of contact we do not have, I would be most pleased to meet with them and see if, in collaboration, we can help those individuals whom they have met to come to freedom.

● (1420)

REQUEST FOR ADMISSION TO CANADA

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, it is amazing that in the delay of almost two years in this life and death situation humanitarian concerns have not predominated.

Will the Secretary of State for External Affairs give us an assurance today, without further delay, that he will send his officials to Afghanistan armed with ministerial permits, and lift these six courageous men out of that country immediately? A team of reporters has established contact with them; they seek political refugee status in Canada.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, like most Members of the House—and I am sure like the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition—I wish the world were that simple. It is not. In light of the fact that there appears to have been a contact made by some Canadians, something we were not able to make following all national and international channels, I have said that I would be most pleased, as would my colleague, the Minister of Employment and Immigration, to meet with those Canadians to see if there is some practical way in which we can act together in the humanitarian cause of bringing them to freedom.

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TRADE

CANADA-UNITED STATES NEGOTIATIONS—FORTHCOMING U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE VOTE

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are deeply concerned about reports from Washington that President Reagan may promise concessions to the U.S. Senate committee to win his free trade vote tomorrow. My question is for the Prime Minister. In these circumstances of concern why has the Prime Minister not communicated directly with the President to discuss this urgent issue? Why has he not been prepared to put very clearly to the President a message that no concessions must be given that will harm our country?