

Oral Questions

● (1440)

[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

GUYANA—INCREASE IN RACIAL AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. The Minister will recall that a year ago he rejected the recommendation of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence that Canada should publicly disapprove of the Guyana Government's human rights policies and practices and should reduce aid to Guyana.

In view of the growing numbers of Guyanese who are clamoring to enter Canada, and especially the rising number of arrivals claiming to be refugees, will the Minister condemn the growing racial and political violence of the Burnham Government of Guyana, and halt aid to Guyana until that Government agrees to end its oppressive policies?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I have no difficulty in espousing the cause of human rights in Guyana as has been done by the Hon. Member. We have drawn in the past and in the future we will continue to draw this matter to the attention of the authorities in Guyana. At the present time there has been no decision, nor is it my intention to terminate aid to that particular country—

Mr. Stevens: Shame!

Mr. MacEachen: —which is presently a member of the Commonwealth Caribbean to which we have directed special attention.

VISA REQUIREMENT FOR GUYANESE IMMIGRANTS

Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question on the same subject is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. In view of the rapidly worsening state of human rights in Guyana and the great danger to legitimate refugee claimants who can now apply to Canada only from within Guyana, will the Minister undertake to reconsider the visa requirement imposed this week? Will he also institute a special program for Guyanese in Canada like the ones previously established for Poles and currently for Guatemalans, and will he also guarantee that for the time being no Guyanese will be involuntarily returned to Guyana?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the answer to the first part of the Hon. Member's question is no. Just having applied the visa requirement, I do not think we should immediately begin to reconsider it. I will consider fully the other representations made by the Hon. Member.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE COMMISSION

DISTRICT OFFICIALS' ACTIONS

Hon. Allan Lawrence (Durham-Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, the other day the Minister of Justice told me that he had not been told of any allegations of criminal offences committed by Unemployment Insurance Commission employees, so today I want to ask the Minister of Employment and Immigration if he has had any reports passed along to him by the Department or the Deputy Minister which indicate allegations of criminal offences by a number of Unemployment Insurance Commission employees in several district offices across the country?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry but I did not catch the first few words of the Hon. Member's question. In terms of the substance of the question as I heard it, the answer is no, at least so far, and I certainly have not received any verbal communication of the representations he has described.

POSSIBLE BREACHES OF LAW

Hon. Allan Lawrence (Durham-Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, because there seems to be a pervasive attitude that civil servants who abuse their positions of trust are dealt with quite differently than if they were ordinary citizens, could the Minister please report back to the House on the number of possible criminal breaches that have taken place by Unemployment Insurance Commission employees, and the number of criminal prosecutions that have taken place as a result?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure of the full extent of the Hon. Member's insinuation. In terms of specific information that we have available, of course I will make it available to him in the appropriate way.

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REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

EXPORTATION OF CAPE BRETON COAL

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Economic and Regional Development. The Minister will be aware of the conclusion of recent negotiations by the Cape Breton Development Corporation with a Japanese steel company and Brazilian Steel for the sale of Canadian coal, not only far below the cost of producing and delivering that coal but also far below the current Canadian export price.

Because this is creating new pressures and difficulties for the rest of the Canadian coal industry, I should like to ask the Minister whether he is aware of this, and how much of the \$134 million which has been passed on to that company from the taxpayers in the current year was used up to capture new markets at the expense of other coal companies.