

*Oral Questions*

● (1410)

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

## EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

DEPARTURE OF AMBASSADOR WARREN FROM WASHINGTON—  
DATE OF ANNOUNCEMENT OF REPLACEMENT

**Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I might begin by saying that we checked this morning and learned that 14 ministers of the Crown are in Ottawa today—

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Clark:**—and, although we certainly understand and approve the idea of ministers getting around the country, we are concerned because, while 14 ministers are in Ottawa, there are only seven in the House today.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Clark:** My question is to one of those, to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. My question relates to the departure—

**An hon. Member:** Here's Lalonde.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Paproski:** The minister of nothing.

**Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** I think the minister of nothing just said something.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Perhaps we would all do well to start again.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Clark:** Mr. Speaker, I apologize for overlooking the presence of the minister "without".

My question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs relates to the departure of Ambassador Jake Warren from Washington. It appears that the announcement of that departure was made inadvertently by the minister and, as of this morning, it appeared that the minister's position had not yet been officially communicated to our embassy in Washington. In light of the damage to Canada's international reputation, the personal embarrassment to an outstanding public servant in the person of Ambassador Warren—

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Clark:**—and the damage that this whole comic opera atmosphere can do to the discussions between the Prime Minister and the President, will the Secretary of State for External Affairs take the opportunity to tell the House of Commons what is going on?

[Mr. Speaker.]

**Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Secretary of State for External Affairs):** Mr. Speaker—

**Mr. Paproski:** You keep quiet, Lalonde; you are nothing but a corporal now.

**Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** Lalonde, stick to your pills.

**Mr. Jamieson:**—I welcome the opportunity to indicate to the House exactly what happened. Let me begin by saying that the questions of the Leader of the Opposition were clearly drawn, for the most part, from a newspaper story which appeared this morning in the *Montreal Gazette*.

**An hon. Member:** No, it came from Ivan Head.

**Mr. Jamieson:** I doubt if they could have come from any other source. But, if they have, let me go back to the fact, namely, that the story to which I am referring and which contained, basically, the substance of the question asked by the hon. member, the story written by Mr. Ben Tierney, is totally groundless and without foundation.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Jamieson:** In so far as the second part of the question is concerned, about an announcement having been made by myself, let me emphasize again that I made no such announcement. I did what I think all members of the House would expect me to do in the circumstances. I was asked a question by a newsman who, from his own sources, had heard of Ambassador Warren's pending departure from Washington. He asked me a question and in conformity with what I think is my reputation, I did not try to be evasive. I told him the facts of the situation.

The facts of that situation are these: Ambassador Warren advised me in October of last year of his desire to be moved from Washington at some mutually convenient time. Certainly, it was not to be beyond the two years which he had indicated initially he was prepared to serve, which would be up to the middle or end of June, as I recall it, of 1977. At that point, and it was an informal discussion, I suggested that he talk to the appropriate people in Ottawa, which he did prior to Christmas. I think this is reasonably common knowledge, certainly among the parties concerned.

Prior to Christmas, the arrangements were concluded for Ambassador Warren to terminate his terms in Washington at the appropriate time, namely at the end of the two-year period. There was no relationship to the Prime Minister's visit to Washington. Indeed, in October when we discussed this, we did not even know that President Carter would in fact be the President of the United States at this time. I want to emphasize again there is no relationship whatsoever. I repeat that it is a total fabrication. If there is anything further I can add to this, because I agree that it is a most unjust embarrassment to Mr. Warren who has been an extremely good public servant of Canada—

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!