

Oral Questions

EMPTY CHAIR

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, no one is disputing who attended the conference. What we are disputing is why the Government of Canada allowed an empty chair and why it did not arrange for at least one of those seven top officials to sit in the chair representing Canada when an important discussion was going on. Why did the Minister not arrange for that to happen?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member has the mistaken impression that a conference was being held in Detroit at which Canada and the United States were negotiating key questions—

Mr. Broadbent: No, he did not say that.

Mr. McMillan:—in the absence of an official delegation from the Government of Canada. That is not true. It was a forum in which Great Lakes related issues were aired, just as they were several months ago on Mackinac Island when I was present with many of the same participants.

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[Translation]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

USE OF PRATT & WHITNEY ENGINES IN IRAN—REQUEST FOR EXPLANATION

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. I'm afraid that Canada is sending supplies to both Iran and Iraq, the two belligerents in the Persian Gulf, because according to my information, Iraq uses eight B-212 ASW-type helicopters, in a special configuration, to attack ships equipped with the same engines manufactured by Pratt & Whitney. It uses them to sink Iranian tankers in the Persian Gulf. I want to ask the Minister: How can he possibly believe Pratt & Whitney's claims that the engines are used only for peaceful purposes, when we know perfectly well that helicopters of this type require a steady supply of spare parts to be able to continue their missions?

[English]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, we believe that Pratt & Whitney has acted in good faith. As well, we believe that the parts in question were destined for civilian commercial use. I can inform the House that as a result of the questions that have arisen Pratt & Whitney has voluntarily postponed further shipments of the order in question, the order being in the amount of some \$2.7 million U.S. About \$624,000 U.S. of the order has been shipped. However, until such time as the investigation and examination of this issue are completed,

Pratt & Whitney has voluntarily withdrawn or postponed any further shipments.

As I said, there has been an acknowledgement of the dual capability of these machines.

Mr. Garneau: That is not what you said yesterday.

Mr. Mazankowski: I informed the House yesterday on the basis of the information I had at that time. There is new information. I have always qualified my answers in that regard. I am trying to be as forthcoming as I can. If the Hon. Member has some criticism with that, then he is probably not interested in my further completion of the answer.

Mr. Garneau: That is what I have, some criticism.

[Translation]

PROVISION OF HELICOPTER PARTS TO PERSIAN GULF REGION—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, the Minister is telling us that he has every confidence in the information provided by Pratt & Whitney which, in turn, gets its information from the Ayatollah Khomeini. That is how it works.

I want to ask the Minister how he expects this House to believe that helicopters, not commercial but military helicopters, in Iran and Iraq can keep flying without having a steady supply of spare parts to repair engines on a daily basis. How?

[English]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, as I think I pointed out, there is a difficulty in proving categorically that these machines are used for one specific purpose or the other. I think the Hon. Member knows that we do not have an embassy in Iran and that this is like selling a typewriter or a telephone. Conceivably, these items could find a way to be used militarily.

Mr. Gauthier: Come on, you can't kill with a typewriter.

Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Thank you for the admission.

Mr. Mazankowski: I repeat, Pratt & Whitney, because of the questions that have arisen, has voluntarily postponed any further shipments until this case can be further analyzed.

EXPORT OF AIRCRAFT ENGINES

Ms. Pauline Jewett (New Westminster—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. Does the Minister know that Pratt & Whitney has also been providing engines for military aircraft—not helicopters but military aircraft—being used in the Iran-Iraq war? Is the Minister aware that the Pilatus PC7 produced by a Swiss company with Pratt & Whitney engines has been used by both sides in the Iran-Iraq war? Did Pratt & Whitney ask for permission to export those engines? Did the Government give such permission?