

Oral Questions

[English]

Mrs. Stewart: Mr. Speaker, an amazing comment which appears to be condoning the lessening of South African debt burden.

On September 28, the Secretary of State for External Affairs said that 12 of the 14 major banks co-ordinating South Africa's debt "agreed that they would be seeking the highest possible interest payments and the fastest possible repayments", a tough line but empty rhetoric given yesterday's announcement.

What will Canada do to press Canadian and international banks to increase pressure on South Africa's dismantling of apartheid? Or, is this government prepared to simply sit idly by and take no responsibility?

[Translation]

Mrs. Landry: Mr. Speaker, you will recall that the Secretary of State for External Affairs asked the banks not to approve new loans for South Africa, and this request was upheld. In the present case, there are no Canadian banks on the committee. The committee has rescheduled the debt, and Canadian banks are part of the package. We will continue to ask the banks to do what they have already done, which is to approve no new loans for South Africa, and we will keep up the pressure.

• (1120)

[English]

Mrs. Stewart: Mr. Speaker, interesting comments from this government when yesterday the Australian Prime Minister, Mr. Hawke, stated that he regretted the bank's decision and the Zambian President, Mr. Kaunda, condemned the banks and stated: "They are sucking the blood out of black South Africans' economy". A Canadian official yesterday is quoted as saying that the South African Bank rescheduling of debt represents "a propaganda victory for South Africa".

This is the wrong signal that we are giving. Will this government immediately announce increased Canadian sanctions against South Africa to ensure that the pressure is maintained?

[Translation]

Mrs. Landry: Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer to an article by Albert Juneau that appeared this morning in *Le Devoir*, and I quote:

The Commonwealth countries have agreed to maintain current sanctions. Their effectiveness is no longer questioned—

The article goes on to say:

Canada's position was therefore reasonable: no new sanctions, except for stricter credit requirements. From now on, the main issue in South Africa is political. The time is ripe for a dialogue between the various components of South Africa's mosaic. Pretoria must initiate negotiations with anti-apartheid groups. The banks have given it some breathing space. Will South Africa take this opportunity to implement reforms that are already long overdue?

Mr. Speaker, we have taken the necessary steps. We will go on doing so by reinforcing sanctions, and of course we hope that negotiations will finally achieve our ultimate goal, which is to dismantle apartheid.

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[English]

NATIONAL ENERGY BOARD

Ms. Catherine Callbeck (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Yesterday, the National Energy Board approved the export to the United States of over 90 per cent of Canada's Arctic natural gas reserves. This comes at a time when concerns about the environment will likely increase greatly the demand for natural gas, which is considered a cleaner fuel than oil.

Will the minister tell this House whether his department has conducted a study of Canada's long-term natural gas needs, particularly in the context of natural gas being seen as an environmentally safe fuel?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, in respect of the National Energy Board approval of the export licence, the first point that I want to make to the hon. member is that any approval of the board is still subject to cabinet scrutiny.

I would say to the hon. member that while she makes the point about gas being a clean burning fuel, the government has programs in places like Vancouver, Alberta, Winnipeg, Toronto, New York, Hamilton and San Diego, where we are using Canadian technology to have cleaner burning methods for mass transit systems. Those who are interested in the environment might even think that that is important. We do, but maybe the critic for the environment does not.