

*Oral Questions*

is very gratified that the very strong and unflinching position taken by the international coalition led to persuade Saddam Hussein to release all of the hostages.

The hon. member raises a question as to whether or not Canada should, in this particular instance, change a policy that has been applied without variation since 1961, a policy that was applied without variation during circumstances when difficult questions arose while the member who poses the question was a member of a government which applied that policy without variation.

The member knows that the arguments made against changing the policy when he was a minister were as valid as they are today. I have considered the question as to whether we should change because of the unusual pressures upon these Canadians, a policy which the hon. member respected when he was a member of a government and which other governments have for nearly three decades now. My view is that we should not change that policy. Naturally, if there are some particular circumstances that the hon. member would want to draw to my attention, I would be prepared to look at them.

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre):** Mr. Speaker, to make the record correct, in our time in government we did not experience the kind of hostage taking that Canadians have experienced in the last period of time in Iraq and Kuwait. I think this is a special circumstance and I would sincerely ask the minister to reconsider his position and the position of the government. I ask him in specific terms if he would have his own officials undertake to contact each of the hostages and their families directly to determine what the nature of their economic and personal circumstances might be and whether in fact some resources, some help or some way of helping them to come back into the country can be offered and also gain from them the kind of information and experience that they had, especially in Kuwait in light of what we heard about atrocities and economic sanctions?

These Canadian hostages are a valuable resource to Canada. I think Canada should be treating them properly. I ask the minister to reconsider his position and give these Canadians the proper deference and the proper credit they deserve for what they did for this country.

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I have answered most of that question. I said that I have considered very seriously whether we should change a policy that was respected by the Liberal Party and by ours, respected by the hon. member when he was a minister, with respect to the principle that there would not be compensation for Canadians who were caught in extraordinary circumstances abroad. I also told him that I would be prepared to look at any serious proposal that he put forward.

With respect to the other part of his question, I think it would be very helpful to my department, and perhaps a subsequent report to Parliament, to consult with the Canadians who were prisoners in Kuwait and in Iraq. I have instructed my officials to undertake that kind of consultation, particularly with a view as to gaining their information on the situation in that region and their view as to improvements that might be made in the way Canada responds to circumstances of that kind should, God forbid, such circumstances occur again.

I think it is particularly important to do that, Mr. Speaker, in light of the recent report by Amnesty International, whose commentary upon the atrocities committed by Iraq in Kuwait should cause great concern to everyone in this House. Very often we neglect the fact that this crisis exists because a war was begun by Iraq against Kuwait and the most cruel kind of treatment is being imposed upon the people of Kuwait.

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#### GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

**Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question with respect to the final, final round of the GATT negotiations which are now being arranged for Geneva early in 1991 to break the deadlock in the agriculture panel and in the services panels.

Is our government still working toward the inclusion of agriculture in the GATT rules? What changes to our October 15 position are we proposing in an effort to get an agreement? What other actions is Canada taking in order to resolve the current impasse?