

Oral Questions

If the committee has recommendations to make, as I stated before, it does not take away from the good work of the committee. If we can further improve that program, we will.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Mr. George S. Rideout (Moncton): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

The minister's decision in the Spencer-Lamont case relies upon the justice and police systems of Brazil, a system whose police solution to the problem with street kids is to acquiesce to their assassination.

The minister gives no weight to Cardinal Arns, the person who stayed with David and Christine all night to preclude their anticipated torture, sat through the trial and heard the judge's admission to political pressure.

Will the minister not, on humanitarian grounds, reverse her regressive decision?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out to the parents of Miss Lamont and Mr. Spencer, I am very sympathetic and very concerned for their situation and that of their families.

I have spent a great deal of time as a result reviewing this case and the implications both for the two who are in prison and for their families to assure myself that I reached a thorough and correct decision.

Let me say that the appeal process is still open. I know that they will take advantage of that. There are some difficulties with the process which our consulate is quite prepared to help with to the extent that is possible.

I believe that the decision I reached was a fair one based not just on the legal advice that I have but on our international obligations both to Canadians and to the conventions we have signed with regard to hostage-taking and kidnapping.

Mr. George S. Rideout (Moncton): My supplementary question is for the same minister.

I have been told by the Lamonts that Christine is working in the prison infirmary, a prison infirmary that does not have Canadian standards of health care, an

infirmary in which her parents worry about her exposure to the AIDS virus. The most recent figures indicate that 30 per cent of Brazilian female inmates either have AIDS or test positive.

Would the minister not rescue David and Christine and not abandon them in Brazil for 28 years?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, we officially told the Brazilian authorities and I have told the parents personally as well as said in this House before that we regard the sentence as excessive and that there are means by which we can achieve the same objective.

First of all, we have an exchange of offenders treaty which has been negotiated and will be ratified later this year. We are ready to ratify it now. The Brazilian process takes a little longer. That would mean that Miss Lamont and Mr. Spencer could serve the rest of their term in Canada. It would also mean that they would be subject to earlier parole.

The other thing, of course, is that we could ask for expulsion at a later date should that be deemed appropriate at some future time.

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HUMAN LIFE INTERNATIONAL

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue.

Human Life International is holding a conference in Ottawa this weekend. This organization is anti-birth control, anti-sex education, anti-gay and lesbian, and anti-abortion, even when the woman's life is in danger. Yet this government supports its activities by giving it charitable tax status.

Why are Canadian taxpayers subsidizing this organization when pro-choice groups are denied charitable tax status?

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, without knowing the details of this particular organization, I can assure the hon. member that the terms of reference and the rules and regulations within Revenue Canada are to put everybody on an equal basis, a level playing field, but I will be very happy to look into this specific matter and get back to the hon. member forthwith.