

Oral Questions

[Translation]

SOUTH AFRICA—APARTHEID—VENICE SUMMIT—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a supplementary to the Minister. In the past, both the Minister and the Prime Minister have asked for more stringent sanctions against South Africa to put an end to the apartheid system. Now that the Prime Minister will be meeting Mrs. Thatcher and President Reagan at the summit, does he intend to follow through on his demands? Is he going to urge participants at the Venice Summit to make a concerted effort and apply strict sanctions against the apartheid regime, and to do so within a very specific timeframe?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition knows perfectly well that the Prime Minister of Canada has played a leading role within the Commonwealth and other organizations by encouraging consistent and increasing pressure on apartheid and by trying to persuade the South African Government to change its policy. We intend to continue this campaign in Venice. I may point out, and this will come as no surprise, that there will be some resistance from other countries at the summit, but nevertheless, the Canadian Government intends to raise the issue in strong terms. It is on the agenda of the first meeting of Heads of State or Governments Monday evening in Venice. We hope it will be possible to achieve some kind of concerted action. I am not suggesting there will necessarily be concerted action on the sanctions, but at least some kind of concerted action by the countries meeting in Venice.

[English]

THIRD WORLD DEBT

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my third question relates to the summit. The Minister may perhaps be aware of a draft report prepared by 24 of the developing nations criticizing the International Monetary Fund, to use the words of the report, for strangling the Third World. The Minister is aware of the severe problem of Third World debt, a potential avalanche of \$1 trillion, and what it is doing to cause deprivation, social unrest, and even perhaps putting at risk peace and stability in certain parts of the world.

Will the Prime Minister request of his counterparts at the summit a thorough review by the leading industrial powers of the policy toward easing that debt burden and rationalizing the approach of the major industrial nations to it?

● (1125)

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the short answer to that question is yes. In fact Canada will be putting forward some proposals of our own, as will other countries. I think there is some hope for some modest movement on the part of the industrialized countries with regard to the debt question.

I share fully the concern expressed by the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition about the seriousness of the problem in debtor countries and the ludicrous nature of the situation. Some countries are now paying out more to meet their obligations than they are receiving in international development assistance or from other sources.

That is a complex problem which requires consistent and sophisticated attention. We hope that process will continue in Venice. We will have some proposals to make.

POLICY OF INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

Miss Aideen Nicholson (Trinity): Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs and is very similar to that just asked by the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

The developing nations are concerned that austerity regimes imposed by the International Monetary Fund have put them on a treadmill of merely servicing their national debts without hope of reducing the principal and without hope of the economic development which would create prosperity for them and markets for us.

In view of this will the Prime Minister point out forcefully at the Venice Summit the risks of this policy to Canada in particular, both as a creditor nation and as a trading nation?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, there will naturally be discussions which touch upon the operations and, undoubtedly, upon the policy of the International Monetary Fund. I would not want to suggest to the House that we expect that there will be any recommendation at this time for a change in practice, but there is certainly no question that if other countries do not raise that matter Canada shall.

There are a range of inconsistencies between some of the hopes expressed by some of the summit countries and the consequences of some of their policies, none, if I may say so, more so than in the field of agriculture. The agricultural subsidy policies of the European Community and the United States and the practices followed by Japan not only impact negatively upon our country but also have very serious and negative effects upon developing countries, many of which have to rely upon agriculture as the basis of their development.

ARMAMENTS EXPENDITURES

Miss Aideen Nicholson (Trinity): Mr. Speaker, Canada has a longstanding commitment to north-south relations based on our belief that achieving global security is very much dependent on our success in reaching greater economic stability in all the countries of the world.

Will the Prime Minister make it very clear to his counterparts at the Summit that increased arms expenditures in trouble spots in the developing countries of the world is no substitute for intelligent economic planning?