

Oral Questions

Mr. Nielsen: I can, however, tell the hon. gentleman that in my opinion he breaches the rules of this House when he refers to evidence submitted to that committee which, in fact it was submitted as he described it, and I do not for a moment—

Mr. Dingwall: Don't mislead the House. You have a habit of doing that.

Mr. Nielsen:—take for a fact his description of it—the hon. gentleman asks me not to mislead the House. I suggest—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Nielsen:—that he and his colleagues should follow that advice more carefully themselves.

Mr. Dingwall: Don't mislead the House.

Mr. Crosbie: Simmer down, dingbat.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

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VETERANS AFFAIRS**SERVICES OF CHAPLAINS**

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Veterans Affairs. I gave his office notice of this question because I did not think he was aware of the decision his Department made. Yesterday we learned that his Department will be terminating the services of its chaplains and that it intends to provide this service on a contract basis. Would the Minister, who is a veteran himself, not agree that the relationship between veterans and chaplains is a very special one which cannot be provided by contracting out services the way you would a dental program or any other kind of program? Would the Minister not agree that that is the case, and agree to rescind that decision?

● (1440)

Hon. George Hees (Minister of Veterans Affairs): The short answer to that question, of course, is no, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate so much that the Hon. Member gave my office notice of this question. It is an important and very serious one and deserves a serious answer. I have written out the answer which I will give him, because I want no mistake made in the understanding of it.

Veterans Affairs has been steadily transferring veterans' hospitals and nursing homes to the provinces for many years now. Gradually, over the years, we have been moving toward contracting chaplains' services. In conformity with this long-standing policy, all chaplains will soon be employed on a contract basis.

Mr. Nystrom: Dial-a-prayer.

Mr. Hees: I am pleased to assure our chaplains that those who will be employed on a contract basis will receive the same

pay and hours of work as they are now receiving. I would like to assure the House that chaplain service to our veterans will not, in any way, be diminished.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Benjamin: But will it be sacred?

DEPARTMENTAL POLICY

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches): My supplementary question is directed to the same Minister, Mr. Speaker. Would he not agree that if his Department is going to continue this service, albeit on a contract basis, it would be much easier on the veterans and would ease any concerns that they may have about that relationship, simply to continue to have the chaplains in the employ of Veterans Affairs?

Mr. Benjamin: It's the same money, the same pay.

Hon. George Hees (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, we are simply acting in conformity with the policy we have steadily been moving toward for many years now in this regard so that there will be a consistent policy in the Department with regard to chaplain services. As I said, the chaplains will be completely protected. They will be receiving the same pay, working the same hours, and giving the same service.

Mr. Deans: Why are you doing it?

Mr. Benjamin: Why bother?

Mr. Hees: Our veterans will, in every way, receive the same service from our chaplains. It is simply that we believe and are firmly convinced that doing the work this way is a more efficient and effective way of providing chaplains' services than that formerly employed.

Mr. Benjamin: You said there'd be no change, so why change it?

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**EXTRADITION OF UNITED STATES CITIZENS**

Mr. Alan Redway (York East): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice. A few days ago the Minister met with the Attorney General of the United States, Mr. Edward Meese, and, according to news reports, discussed, among other things, the extradition of Charles Ng and Joseph Kindler. Could the Minister tell us if he has now received a request for the extradition of Charles Ng, and can he assure Canadians that Joseph Kindler will be home in time for Christmas?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I did meet with Attorney General Meese on Monday and among the matters we discussed were the two matters the hon. gentleman mentioned. With respect to Charles Ng, there has been no request as yet