

Oral Questions

IRAN—INQUIRY RESPECTING REPAYMENT OF DEBTS TO EXPORT DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I direct my supplementary question either to the Prime Minister or to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. I would ask whether one or the other minister of the Government of Canada could tell us whether the debts owed by the government of Iran to the Canadian Export Development Corporation are being repaid on schedule and whether the matter of compensation to that corporation and to Canadian firms who abandoned or who had projects cancelled in Iran prior to the downfall of the regime of the Shah will be settled prior to the resumption of normal and full diplomatic and commercial relations with Iran.

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, I will have to take that question as notice. However, I would think that if there are outstanding problems relating to our economic relations with Iran we would want to take them into consideration before deciding to repeal the special act that we passed.

UNITED STATES—INQUIRY WHETHER MEETING WITH PRESIDENT-ELECT PLANNED—RENEGOTIATION OF EAST COAST FISHERIES TREATY

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Madam Speaker, my question is addressed to the Prime Minister who on his recent trip was able to visit certain countries but, as we all know, was unable to visit certain others. Among these hits and misses was one opportunity which the Prime Minister missed, and that was in not accepting the offer of the President-elect of the United States to visit Ottawa in January. Because of the tremendous importance of our bilateral relations with the United States, can the Prime Minister now tell us what plans he has that are under way to meet with President-elect Reagan?

● (1420)

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, when the office of the President-elect suggested a meeting, it would have fallen in the time when I was toward the end of my Nigerian visit and at the beginning of the Senegalese one. I did not feel it was proper to ask these governments to set aside their meetings because the office of the President-elect suggested that there could be a meeting soon in his term of office. I believe discussions are ongoing between our ambassador, Mr. Towe, and the people in the entourage of President-elect Reagan; dates are being looked at but none has been suggested to me yet.

Miss MacDonald: Madam Speaker, I hope we will have an early announcement of those dates, because I think all Canadians would like to see our relations with the United States become much firmer than they have been recently. On that basis I should like to direct a supplementary question to either the Prime Minister or the Secretary of State for External Affairs. It concerns the remarks of the incoming secretary of

state, Alexander Haig, the other day with regard to the east coast fisheries agreement when he said that the treaty would have to be renegotiated. This was further followed up by Senator Percy, who indicated that there would have to be concessions on both sides. Has the government indicated to the incoming administration that there is no interest in this country or in this Parliament, as we have served notice on three different occasions, of renegotiating that treaty, certainly not from a Canadian point of view since we feel it is basically a fair treaty to both sides the way it stands now?

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, I think the hon. lady will realize the difficulty of doing both things suggested by her question at the same time. In the first part she suggested that relations with the United States should be improved, that they should be progressing, and even before the President-elect takes office she makes representations to the government that we should not budge an inch on the negotiations of the previous government. I am rather inclined to support the second part of the hon. lady's suggestion, but she must realize that in such matters, if we want to stand up for Canadian interests, we cannot assume it will always please the United States.

Mr. Clark: What a fraud!

Miss MacDonald: Madam Speaker, my final supplementary question is directed to the Prime Minister. Perhaps he will remember—I will recall it to his memory—that on three different occasions the House passed unanimous motions that the east coast fisheries treaty should be accepted as it stands and should not be amended by arrangements with the United States Senate, such as Senator Percy seems to be working out with our Canadian ambassador in Washington. That is the kind of arrangement I would want the Prime Minister to signify that he is backing up from Canada's point of view—that there will be no concessions on the east coast fisheries treaty, that we will not give in either to pressure from the United States Senate or any other body, and I think the Prime Minister will find if he conveys that sentiment—

Some hon. Members: Order, order.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Clark: Oh, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I should like the hon. member, especially since I gave her an opportunity to ask an extra question, to proceed with her question immediately.

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, if the hon. lady looks at my previous answer she will say that I agreed with her.

Miss MacDonald: There will be no concessions.

Mr. Trudeau: I was just pointing out that to take a very rigid stand in advance is not conducive to starting out, in the way she suggests, to improve relations with the United States.

Miss MacDonald: Of course it is.