

If the Leader of the Government in the Senate is not prepared to pass on my first question, then I ask her to pass on my request to replace that minister, or at least make changes in order to save the morale of one of the greatest fighting forces that this world has ever seen — our Canadian Armed Forces.

Honourable senators, it is unacceptable that members of the armed forces, past and present, should be forced to deal with these differences of opinion which will completely undermine the morale of this great military organization. You need not take my word for it. On a recent television program, I heard a report that the Americans have stated that the work done by the Canadian troops in Somalia was, overall, above reproach and to be commended.

Will the Leader of the Government request the Prime Minister to do something about the situation, to either replace or fire the minister or to make some other effort to help our armed forces?

Senator Fairbairn: Honourable senators, frankly, I will not have that conversation with the Prime Minister. The Minister of National Defence has carried out his responsibilities, and the Chief of Defence Staff has carried out his responsibilities. Nevertheless, I agree with Senator St. Germain that the morale of the armed forces is of great concern to this government and to armed forces members.

Although I have not had the privilege of serving in the armed forces, I do have the privilege of serving as Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel of the 18th Air Defence Regiment, and I take those responsibilities very seriously. Every effort is being made, and will continue to be made, to deal with the difficulties that have arisen surrounding recent incidents.

There is a great desire on the part of all Canadians to support our forces, which are, as Senator St. Germain has said, the finest fighting forces anywhere in the world. Our forces have done this country enormously proud in the work that they have undertaken under very difficult circumstances in the former Yugoslavia.

I appreciate the concerns of my honourable colleague. I certainly will communicate those concerns. In concert with all members of this chamber, I will do everything in my power to improve and consolidate the morale of our fine fighting forces and all elements of the armed forces of Canada.

DEFENCE

SAFETY OF SEA KING HELICOPTERS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Terry Stratton: Honourable senators, I too welcome the new senators to this place. I like Sir John A. Macdonald's definition of the Senate:

It is a saucer into which you pour legislation to cool.

Honourable senators, I am disturbed to learn that another Sea King helicopter was in trouble recently. Two weeks ago, one of our aging Sea Kings was forced to make an emergency landing as a result of a warning light coming on, indicating transmission problems. The incident happened in Quebec.

In response to a question in the House of Commons, the Minister of National Defence said that the incident was very

unfortunate. He also said that the Sea Kings are totally safe to fly. How can the minister state that the Sea Kings are perfectly safe to fly in light of these repeated reports of failures?

Senator Berntson: They keeping falling out of the sky, but are perfectly safe to fly.

• (1545)

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn (Leader of the Government): As the honourable senator will know, the white paper on defence, in which our new colleague Senator Rompkey was very much involved, clearly confirmed the government's intention to purchase replacements for the Sea King helicopters. The government is considering all options. At this point in time, no contract has been approved.

My honourable friend will know that persons expert in the field have indicated that with the kind of maintenance we expect, the Sea Kings will be safe to operate, I believe, until the end of this century. From time to time, there have been tragic incidents. However, the information accepted by the government is that we are pressing on. The choice has not yet been made, and the Sea Kings will be maintained at the highest level until it is.

Senator Stratton: Honourable senators, when is this likely to occur? How many more crashes and failures must we have before the government will take action?

Senator Fairbairn: As I indicated, honourable senators, the government is considering a number of options. As to the precise timing, I am afraid I cannot indicate that to my honourable friend today.

HUMAN RIGHTS

RATIFICATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS CONVENTION OF ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Noël A. Kinsella: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

Madam Minister, I was pleased to read in the *Montreal Gazette* this morning a story to the effect that your colleague the Minister of Immigration used his authority to grant landed status to the Langner family. Stanislaw and Ewa Langner were born in Poland; their children were born in Canada. The minister, I think, made the correct decision. I would ask that you convey to him my pleasure upon learning of this decision.

What is interesting about the story is that the Langners' case rose to prominence after the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights — which is the commission of human rights of the OAS — became interested in it.

Canada has neither signed nor ratified the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights. My recollection from the Red Book is that the government was prepared to honour this human rights convention; in other words, Canada would sign and ratify the Human Rights Convention of the OAS. Could the minister inform this chamber as to the progress in ratifying that human rights instrument on behalf of Canada?