

Oral Questions

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

CAMBODIA—GOVERNMENT ACTION TO ASSIST POLITICAL REFUGEES—RECOGNITION OF NEW REGIME

Mr. Claude Wagner (Saint-Hyacinthe): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address my question to the right hon. Prime Minister. In view of the apparent fall of Phnom Penh to Khmer Rouge insurgents and the Khmer Rouge indication that those associated with the previous government or sympathetic to it would be liable to execution, is our government, either through the United Nations or on its own, prepared to take any initiatives to assist political refugees, either with safe passage out of Phnom Penh, or more directly, in terms of accepting any such refugees who may seek admission to this country?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if any initiatives have been taken but I shall inquire.

Mr. Wagner: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question also for the right hon. Prime Minister. In view of the decision by our Commonwealth sister, Australia, to recognize the new regime in Phnom Penh, can the Prime Minister indicate at what stage our own government's evaluation of the recognition question is at present?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, when the general principles of a measure of stability and durability have been established we would extend recognition but this is a matter of judgment. It is a matter of getting information from other friendly countries, particularly in Asia. In view of the fact that Canada does not have any immediate national interests of great importance involved I think the question does not have to be answered urgently.

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IMMIGRATION

REQUEST FOR ASSURANCE CAMBODIANS NOT FORCED TO LEAVE CANADA

Mr. Claude Wagner (Saint-Hyacinthe): Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary is addressed to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration. Can the minister assure the House that any Cambodian students or nationals living in Canada who might, for political purposes, find it difficult and unsafe to return home, will, in fact be allowed to apply for more permanent immigration or resident status and not be forced to return home?

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I have already indicated that Cambodian or Vietnamese people who are in Canada temporarily would not be asked to leave while the present emergency and confusion exists. When that situation is clarified, the degree of which I obviously cannot indicate now, we will review the situation. In addition, as I have already indicated publicly as well, people who are outside Viet Nam or Cambodia but from those countries who apply to stay in Canada on the grounds of being refugees,

[Mr. Speaker.]

would be judged in terms of our normal refugee program and policies.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

VIET NAM AND CAMBODIA—ROLE OF UNITED NATIONS COMMISSIONER IN DEALING WITH REFUGEES

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs. In view of his earlier replies about the use of multilateral aid channels for getting food and medical assistance to this area in question, can he say if there are indications that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and his staff have been or will be allowed to play a full role to alleviate the distress of refugees in this area.

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak specifically about the High Commissioner for Refugees, but I can say that the food aid and other aid Canada is providing to international agencies is being made available in all parts of South Viet Nam and Cambodia regardless of the group which is in control.

VIET NAM—REQUEST FOR ASSURANCE CANADIAN AID BEING DISTRIBUTED IN ALL AREAS

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. The Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs did not say by what means aid is being distributed. I should like to know if by any chance there are reports from our man in Hanoi, for example, saying that the refugee situation in the area overrun by the PRG is also being dealt with in the same way under this assistance program.

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs): Yes, Mr. Speaker. The High Commissioner for Refugees is one of three international organizations through which we give relief and the information we have is that this kind of relief is being given in areas controlled by the PRG and in Cambodia.

CAMBODIA—SUGGESTED EARLY RECOGNITION OF NEW REGIME TO MAKE AID PROGRAM MORE EFFECTIVE

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I address a question relating to the same general area to the Prime Minister. As it is the desire of Canadians to give as much help as possible to countries like Cambodia through aid and rehabilitation, and as this can be done more effectively if we have contact with the de facto government there, will the government speed up its process of assessing when recognition should be accorded.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, as I answered the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe, the government is trying to assess the situation and is