

● (1420)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

SITUATION IN IRAN—REQUESTED GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR POSITION OF WESTERN WORLD

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister: it has to do with the events in the Middle East in general, and Iran in particular.

This House knows—and I believe the world knows—that there is only one way of dealing with international terrorism, and that is through international action. Countries have learned that over the years in trying to deal singly with hijacking of aircraft. Now that international terrorism is being sanctioned and condoned by the State of Iran, can the Prime Minister tell us if any action has been taken by our government in the international community in order to support the United States and to indicate that, against this form of terrorism, we all stand united behind the United States, as members of all three parties have indicated in the House through various statements in the past two weeks?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the question because it gives me the opportunity to indicate that Canada has taken every available opportunity to make known to the officials of Iran our deep objection to the abrogation of international practice that has been evidenced in their country, and has made known to the United States our willingness to be of assistance in any practical way we can to aid citizens of the United States in their very difficult circumstances in Iran.

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Prime Minister on these important and positive steps, but what I am really suggesting is that there is another stage now into which these events have been unfolding for more than two weeks. I believe there is another stage of action. We are not only a country acting alone. Whether it be Canada or some other country indicating support of the United States in condemnation of Iran, I think—as in dealing, once again, with hijacking—it is important not to have isolated states indicate their views and principles in support of Iran, and to be faced with the entire civilized community in a massive common front against the actions of the government of Iran.

The Prime Minister was in Tokyo. Perhaps he should begin with the other six who were there. He was at the Commonwealth meeting. Perhaps we should be dealing with heads of the Commonwealth. I believe it is not enough to tell the United States that we support them. My question to the Prime Minister is the following: Is it not time for Canada to take the initiative—if, indeed, it has not already been taken—to bring the entire civilized world to the support of the United States so

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that there be no chink in the armour, and that in this form of terrorism we stand united with the United States?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, I agree completely with the view expressed by the Leader of the Opposition and concurred in, I believe, by all members of the House. I can report to the House and to the Leader of the Opposition that, in addition to the actions I indicated earlier, we have been working actively with representatives of other nations in Iran and elsewhere. In Iran, in particular, we have willingly assumed a role of some leadership in bringing together representatives of other countries in Iran, which has been made necessary by the fact that the dean of the diplomatic corps there—the representative of Czechoslovakia—has not been prepared to play the role of bringing together other nations. Canada has moved into that position.

We are also continuing actively to explore every other instrument available to us, whether through the United Nations, the Commonwealth or any other association that Canada has with other nations, to find effective means through which our views and the views of the civilized world can be brought to bear upon the authorities of Iran to bring an end to a situation which we consider unacceptable and wish to have terminated as quickly as possible.

Mr. Trudeau: A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I mention this in full realization of the fact that a lot of this action might have to be taken behind the scenes, at least in the early stages, and I do not want to probe the Prime Minister any more than is needed. However, if he has not in his answer indicated clearly that he has already done so, I hope he will, consider an initiative by Canada leading to active meetings of an increasing number of countries where we would, in a common front, tell the world that in this case it is not a matter of supporting the United States alone, but it is a matter of supporting the concept of civilized international law without which all order in the world would end.

● (1425)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: I appreciate the understanding of the Leader of the Opposition and other members of the House that in circumstances such as this the initiatives which are taken must very often be taken privately. I can assure the House that the Government of Canada has acted on a wide range of fronts to make exactly that point known to the authorities in Iran, and that we are prepared to consider and pursue any initiative which would be useful in ensuring that there is respect for international standards and international law in the Iranian situation.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Cape Breton Highlands-Canso): In view of the fact that the Prime Minister has made a very positive declaration today in the House—one which we welcome—and in view of the fact that the government of France has issued a similar statement following a cabinet meeting,