

Oral Questions

of the former government with respect to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. When asked the other day by the press as to the difference between the two situations, I understand that the hon. member for St. John's West stated that in the case of Afghanistan the Soviet government was invited into Afghanistan by the Afghan government. If that is the kind of foreign policy which is propagated by members of the party opposite, then I do not think we have any lessons to take from them.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

• (1125)

NATURE OF EXPORTS

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Madam Speaker, I should like to ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs whether he recognizes any difference between the export of wheat and the export of nuclear fissionable materials. Does he see any difference between them?

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs): What I see, Madam Speaker, is that the hon. member is attempting to score political capital by trying to make suggestions that the government has not been wholly supporting the British position. The Prime Minister is on record as stating that we are 100 per cent behind the position of the United Kingdom. We have satisfied every request which the United Kingdom has made of us in this crisis, and we have taken all the same measures as her friends in the European community.

Mr. Clark: MacGuigan, the arms merchant.

STATEMENT BY ARGENTINIAN OFFICIAL ON USE OF FISSIONABLE MATERIAL

Mr. Mark Rose (Mission-Port Moody): Madam Speaker, is the Secretary of State for External Affairs aware that a high Argentinian official has admitted that one of the interests Argentina had in acquiring a Candu reactor in the first place was for its possible military implications, and to learn about the use of fissionable material for military purposes?

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, if my hon. friend is referring to a television program which was aired some time ago, in which a number of statements were made, he will know it was not the Government of Canada on which the finger was put as a possible source of nuclear supplies for non-peaceful purposes.

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MEDICAL CARE

AMOUNT OF FEDERAL FUNDING

Mrs. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of National Health and Welfare, of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, I will direct my question to the Acting Prime Minister. It

concerns the erosion of medical care and health services in this country.

Yesterday we learned from the Minister of National Health and Welfare that she will no longer insist on eliminating extra billing for medicare. We on this side consider this a betrayal of the whole principle of medicare and the 1966 Medical Care Act to which the government is committed. In addition, we know that the provinces are facing cutbacks in federal funding for medical care. This year there will be a reduction of some \$800 million in federal payments. I want to ask the Acting Prime Minister if these trends and cutbacks by the federal government mean that it is no longer committed to the Medical Care Act of 1966, and does it mean that it is in favour of extra billing, user fees, and long waiting lists for medical care?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the hon. member for Oshawa, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, the hon. member for Beaches, the hon. member for New Westminster-Coquitlam, and the hon. member for Nanaimo-Alberni, I am pleased to answer the question of the hon. member for Vancouver East by saying that the answer is no.

PROVISION OF SERVICES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Mrs. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Madam Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the same minister, who seems so energetic this morning. I am glad that the minister responded because I believe he was responsible for the initiation of some of the medicare legislation to which I referred. Is the government aware that in British Columbia today there is a cutback of some 1,200 acute care beds that have been closed down, 3,000 hospital workers have been laid off, and 12,000 people are waiting for elective surgery?

Since the federal government must obviously share responsibility for this very severe crisis in health care, will the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, speaking as Acting Acting Prime Minister, undertake to ask cabinet for a review of this situation, as it affects not only British Columbia but all other provinces? Under the legislation to which the government is committed, will the minister guarantee a review of federal funding to help meet these required costs?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, as the Acting Acting Minister of National Health and Welfare, I will take due notice of the representations made by the hon. member. I wish to draw to her attention the fact that the administration of health comes under provincial responsibility. This week the Minister of National Health and Welfare met with provincial ministers of health to try to stress to them the importance of maintaining the highest standards of service to the Canadian public. I would urge my hon. friend to use every effort to try to convince the government of British Columbia to maintain those high standards and to co-operate fully with the federal government in achieving that particular objective.