

Oral Questions

[Translation]

In other words, he suggested an approach that did not include military force. Did the Prime Minister actually make such suggestions before the Americans decided to send a military force against Libya?

[English]

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I listened with care to the Leader of the New Democratic Party last night when, toward the end of his remarks, he brought forward some useful and constructive suggestions with respect to getting at the root causes of terrorism and finding a solution. He can be sure that those considerations have been brought to the attention of the Prime Minister and of the Secretary of State for External Affairs who is having discussions this week, at the official level, with those who are planning for the Tokyo Summit where the matter will be raised.

If the hon. gentleman has any further suggestions along the line of those he was making last night, I would be very happy if he would forward them to the Prime Minister so that they can be added to the agenda.

● (1425)

REQUEST THAT CANADA INTERVENE ON ISSUE WITH SUPERPOWERS

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, my question pertains to action that I hoped had been taken before the American Government decided to use force to deal with the situation. I heard the Deputy Prime Minister say that the suggestions I made are going to be considered. I have another concrete suggestion to which I would like the Deputy Prime Minister to give a serious response right now, if he would.

The Soviet Union and the United States have only two strong points upon which they can agree regarding the Middle East and they are important ones. First, they both have opposed state-sanctioned terrorism by the Khadafy regime in Libya. Second, they both have had terribly lamentable hostage experiences in the region. Considering this, will the Government of Canada urge the two superpowers to use their influence, given their strong agreement in the Middle East, to deal with the root problems of tension in that area?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, of course all along that has been the objective of the Canadian Government. Indeed, before we took office, as far back as the Bonn Summit, Canada led the way in urging upon other nations a solution which would end the cycle of violence. It is that ongoing work that will be addressed once again in Tokyo, hopefully—and I think we all feel this way—with even more positive results than we have seen in the past.

CANADIAN APPROACH

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, in the past the Government of Canada has had a good reputation for constructive involvement in the Middle East. Considering that the Soviets put considerable distance between themselves and Mr. Khadafy through a statement made by Mr. Arbatov in the last 72 hours, and considering that the Americans are obviously concerned with terrorism, I would like to ask the Deputy Prime Minister if the Government, rather than waiting for the summit, will diplomatically, correctly, and concretely approach both the Soviet Union and the United States and ask them to begin to work constructively together now to deal with the root causes of terrorism in the Middle East.

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, again I remind the hon. gentleman that there are discussions at the official level this very week in preparation for addressing this matter at the Tokyo Summit which is only two weeks away. Certainly the suggestion the Hon. Member makes is a useful one and I am sure it will be considered very carefully by the Secretary of State for External Affairs when that agenda reaches its final stages of preparation and talks begin.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. The Deputy Prime Minister did not answer the question put to him by the Leader of the Opposition regarding the contradiction between his statement and the statement of the Prime Minister. Last night the Deputy Prime Minister said that the United States had no alternative but to take the action it took the day before, whereas the Prime Minister, in a statement he made yesterday morning, urged negotiated settlements. Would the Deputy Prime Minister tell us which is the official position of the Canadian Government, what he said last night or what the Prime Minister said yesterday morning?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, there is no difference between what the Prime Minister has been saying and what I have been saying. We have been saying all along that terrorism is reprehensible and evil, something which all members of the international community must work to eliminate. We accept the evidence of Libyan complicity in the Berlin nightclub attack. The United States Government, as President Reagan said on television on Monday night, vigorously pursued a variety of diplomatic and economic options but found it was left with no alternative but to attack military installations in Libya—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. Order.