

*Oral Questions*

but they accumulate exorbitant profits and pay very little in taxes. Meanwhile, these banks can impose anywhere from 55 to 160 different charges, at varying rates and increasing at various exorbitant percentages.

I want to ask the Minister of Consumer Affairs to stand up for consumers for a change. Is the Government going to tolerate the banks abusing their virtual monopoly over Canadians' money by imposing service charges at whatever rate they see fit? Will Canadians continue to subsidize the record profits of Canadian banks, and bail them out from bad investments in developing countries?

**Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs):** That was a fine speech, Mr. Speaker. In answer to what I think was a question buried in that speech, yes, we are concerned about the new fees and increasing charges which are a relatively new phenomenon. In this regard, officials in my Department are examining and monitoring the situation. We are concerned there be adequate and timely disclosure of these fees to consumers. We are in discussions with the Canadian Bankers Association to see if there will be some voluntary compliance in this regard. We are also having discussions with the Minister of Finance in respect to possible amendments to the Bank Act should that be necessary.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Hon. Member for Nickel Belt on a short supplementary question.

[*Translation*]

## BANKS—FREEZE ON SERVICE CHARGES

**Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the same Minister.

Service charges levied by the five major banks have gone up by 29 per cent between 1982 and 1986, whereas inflation has increased by 19.4 per cent. Would the Department be prepared to ask the banks to freeze their service charges until public hearings have been held just so consumer groups and the banks might have an opportunity to study the situation?

● (1500)

[*English*]

**Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Standing Committee on Finance, which is chaired so ably by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Mississauga South, is looking at the issue. I certainly think that it is something that could be examined profitably by the Standing Committee.

As I indicated, we are monitoring the situation. We are talking to the Bankers' Association and having discussions with the Department of Finance about possible remedial action, if required.

## IMMIGRATION

## NICARAGUA—POLICY CONCERNING MEMBERS OF CONTRA FORCES

**Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. It concerns Canada's proposal for refugee assistance to the Contra rebels toward facilitating a Central American peace plan. Given that this initiative was offered by the Secretary of State for External Affairs in Nicaragua on Sunday, dismissed as hypothetical by the Minister for External Relations in Ottawa on Tuesday, and today rejected outright by this Minister in statements to *La Presse*, I would like to ask the Minister this.

Why is the Government conducting immigration and, indeed, foreign policy in such a confusing, contradictory and embarrassing manner? Will the Minister with one clear voice clarify and inform the House and Canadians of what the Government's official policy is on any proposed refugee programs for Nicaragua and, indeed, for the Central American region?

**Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, I do not think that there is any confusion or contradiction. The Secretary of State for External Affairs said that this was a hypothetical question. It is clear, and my friend knows very well, what the policy of the country is in terms of refugees. A case-by-case assessment is performed by the Department. Whoever comes into the country has to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The Hon. Member knows full well that all those accused of violence, whoever they are, will not be accepted. That is something which will not be decided by the Hon. Member or by me; it will be decided by the refugee determination process. I think that the Immigration Act is good. It is not contradictory. It does not contradict what has been said by the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

## CENTRAL AMERICA—ARIAS PEACE PLAN—CANADIAN ROLE

**Hon. Douglas C. Frith (Sudbury):** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. Liberals support the Arias peace plan in Central America. We also believe that any ministerial statements on this very serious matter ought to represent government policy and not reflect personal opinion. Would the Deputy Prime Minister not agree that the Secretary of State for External Affairs is acting in a very bizarre and amateurish way in promoting the idea of troops being used as peacekeepers in that area without first having obtained Cabinet approval?

**Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and President of the Treasury Board):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps the best approach would be to wait until the Right Hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs returns, since what the Hon. Member is really talking about is second-hand expressions.