

result of a fire or a disaster and since an elderly person cannot obtain that assistance from the Department of Social Affairs in Quebec and does not receive the old age security pension even if under the Canadian constitution it is strictly under provincial jurisdiction, can the minister tell the House whether he intends in the near future to correct that oversight through the Canada Assistance Plan which would enable a senior citizen in receipt of an old age security pension to enjoy the same rights as welfare recipients following a fire or other disaster?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the matter of social assistance in exceptional cases such as that mentioned by the hon. member comes under provincial jurisdiction. The Canada Assistance Plan now provides federal government sharing of the amounts allocated by the provinces to persons in need for that purpose. Consequently it would not be necessary to amend the federal law. If the province wishes to assume its own responsibilities in that field, we will share the necessary costs up to 50 per cent.

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[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

REASON FOR ALLEGED SECRET EXPULSION FROM CANADA OF
MR. PERDOMO, REPRESENTATIVE OF CUBA

Mr. Otto Jelinek (High Park-Humber Valley): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs, who was directly involved with the issue I raised in my motion under Standing Order 43. I would like to ask the minister if he could either confirm or deny allegations that one Alfonso Perdomo, once second in command of the Cuban embassy in Ottawa, was expelled from Canada last June along with a number of his colleagues for deceitful practices towards this government regarding foreign aid to that nation, and if the minister can confirm this expulsion, why was it not made public at that time?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the question raised by the hon. member is probably subsequent to the action recently taken by the government of Canada when it sought the departure from Canada of a number of Cuban officials because of the conduct of intelligence operations in Canada. That action has been taken and is an indication of the seriousness with which the government looks at these activities.

With respect to earlier cases it has been the policy to apply similar principles with respect to requests made to foreign countries. In this particular case we have secured the removal of these persons, and we hope that we will be able to overcome any difficulties which might have been created by this event in our relations with Cuba.

Oral Questions

SUGGESTED COMMITTEE STUDY OF ALLEGED SUBVERSIVE
ACTIVITIES OF CUBAN DIPLOMATS

Mr. Otto Jelinek (High Park-Humber Valley): I would like to assure the minister that this case has nothing to do with the recent expulsions of people from the Cuban consulate in Montreal. These revelations which are presently being made in the affirmative have not been denied by officials of the Department of External Affairs. I am wondering whether the minister would be in a position to form a parliamentary committee or perhaps use the subcommittee of External Affairs dealing with CIDA to study the charges which are being made with regard to the expulsion of Cubans, to study all aid directed to Cuba and to stop any further aid to Cuba until these allegations have been looked into.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs): With respect to Cuba, we have at the present time a \$10 million line of credit which provides for the purchase in Canada of Canadian goods and provides for the supply of Canadian technicians for operations in Cuba. There is no direct cash transfer to the government of Cuba. All the funds are expended in the way I have described and have to do with the building of the social and agricultural infrastructure in Cuba. I believe that it is entirely appropriate for any committee of the House to deal with the adequacy of such a program, which is a people to people program based on the necessity for economic development in Cuba. I also believe that it is wise to detach from that consideration the question of security, which is entirely different and which in the normal course is not given the same public disclosure as would be the case with our aid program to Cuba.

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AGRICULTURE

ALLEGED CONFLICTING STATEMENTS OF MINISTERS ON FOOD
POLICY

Mr. Arnold Malone (Battle River): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce has been travelling across the country saying that Canada needs to develop a national integrated food policy, and the Minister of Agriculture, when speaking to the York County Soil and Crop Improvement Association, stated that Canada already has a national food policy. Which one of the ministers was telling the truth? If we have a national food policy, would the minister table it in the House?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, in this country we have food which is cheap when we consider this country has 23 million people, is 4,000 miles wide and the cost is only about one per cent different from that in the United States. If anyone can improve on our food policy, any member of my cabinet or otherwise, let him do so. However, I have not read what the hon. minister was saying. I will not go solely on what the hon. member said because in the past he has been wrong.