

Oral Questions

the other place would like to stick Canadian taxpayers with a bill for \$445 million and I want to see this afternoon if the Reform Party is going to put its votes where its mouth is.

[Translation]

SOCIAL PROGRAM REFORM

Mr. Maurice Dumas (Argenteuil—Papineau): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development.

On March 9, the minister indicated in this House that he wanted to review old-age security programs. Following the general outcry caused by this announcement, the Prime Minister decided that the review would be limited to the Canada Pension Plan and RRSPs. This review was to be tabled last June but the government has clearly delayed it.

My question is this: Can the minister tell us why the government has delayed announcing its intentions by tabling the review promised for last June?

• (1450)

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification): Mr. Speaker, we are presently speaking with a number of groups and organizations throughout Canada, particularly as they represent seniors, to get their point of view.

I want to use the opportunity to correct one very mistaken statement I know the member made inadvertently and that is that we said that we would be doing anything about old age pensions. We never said that. We said we would be preparing a paper to look at the long range income security issues facing Canada.

That was a commitment made in the budget and that is it, period.

[Translation]

Mr. Maurice Dumas (Argenteuil—Papineau): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. Does the minister still intend to slash programs for seniors in order to finance other federal government programs? Will we have to wait until after the Quebec referendum to know the answer?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification): Mr. Speaker, it never was our intention, it will not be our intention, *la réponse est non*.

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HAITI

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, last week the Prime Minister's government committed to send troops and RCMP to

Haiti. Yesterday RCMP chief superintendent Mr. Pouliot stated that retraining the Haitian police force would take from seven to ten years.

Since the Prime Minister is asking Canadian soldiers and police to risk their lives in the chaos of Haiti and Canadian taxpayers to finance it, will he at least tell us his plan, the costs and how long we can expect to have Canadians in Haiti?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the hon. member that Canadian commitments through the United Nations are well known and well supported by the overwhelming majority of Canadians.

Indeed it is clear that when Canada responds to a request by the United Nations we follow the longstanding practice to serve wherever we are asked and particularly to serve in an area close to our own country in our own hemisphere.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, there is not enough maple syrup in Canada to cover the waffling of this government.

Since we cannot get an answer on any kind of a plan for Canadians, we do not know what it is going to cost and we do not know how long they are going to be there, could we at least find out the commitments, who they have been made to, what we have committed and why those commitments cannot be explained to the Canadian people?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the hon. member has all the numbers he wants. In fact they have been part of the estimates. There have been witnesses before a parliamentary committee who gave all the indications. For the benefit of the hon. member I will send him a letter giving all the numbers that he has already.

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[Translation]

TURBOT FISHERY

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Gaspé): Mr. Speaker, on several occasions, the Minister of Fisheries encouraged Gaspé fishermen in their plan to catch turbot; last March, at the Boston Seafood Show; in April, with his Quebec counterpart and in July, the minister himself admitted it in an interview with the Canadian press. However, on July 20, with only a few hours' notice, the minister denied the Gaspé fishermen access to the resource, even though they had just invested more than \$700,000.

Does the minister admit that his about-face alone is responsible for this summer's turbot saga, which led to the arrest of the Gaspé fishermen, their being fined and losing investments of hundreds of thousands of dollars?