

Oral Questions

Credit. It is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. A few moments ago the Acting Prime Minister provided some information to the House concerning the present status of Mr. Gerald Utting, a Toronto *Star* reporter. Can the minister provide a little more information about the present status of Mr. Utting? I ask this question against the delicate background of two events in the past two days, first, a conversation that took place between the minister's officials and the Uganda High Commissioner to Canada, and second, the announcement by U.N. Secretary General Kurt Waldheim that President Idi Amin has agreed to allow a United Nations team to investigate human rights in Uganda.

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will appreciate, as I think he used the word, the delicacy of my answer. I was advised just a few moments ago that further discussions took place this morning here in Ottawa between the High Commissioner and officials of my department. Certain steps are presently being taken. I can only conclude from the information provided to me that the prospects look hopeful in getting some firm information on the whereabouts and condition of Mr. Utting in the very near future. In other words, direct contact has been made with Uganda regarding this matter.

CANADIAN ROLE IN MAINTAINING HUMAN RIGHTS—REQUEST
FOR REPORT ON PREPARATIONS FOR MEETING ON HELSINKI
AGREEMENT

Mr. Douglas Roche (Edmonton-Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the answer of the minister. Since human rights have become a major theme in world diplomacy in the past few months, what role does Canada intend playing not only in the specific Uganda situation but in other troubled areas such as Ethiopia and Chile, which are of concern to the United Nations also? Also, in what way will the minister report to the House Canada's preparations for the Helsinki meeting that will be examining violations of human rights in the Soviet bloc?

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, on the developments yesterday with regard to President Amin's willingness to accept the United Nations investigatory team, this is of course, although presumably indirectly, in response to a motion moved by Canada at the Geneva meeting some time ago. In that case, what is now being agreed to by Mr. Amin appears to be consistent with what we have been seeking. Whether Canada will have a direct membership on the team which goes to Uganda is not clear at the moment. Presumably, the parties concerned will be consulting as to the make-up and nature of the team and the conditions under which they will go to Uganda.

On other matters relating to non-signatory countries to the Helsinki agreement, there are no new initiatives planned with regard to, for example, Ethiopia and Chile other than a repetition in whatever forums are available. The United Nations and the Canadian position, as the hon. member knows, is very strongly opposed both to human rights viola-

[Mr. Roche.]

tions in Uganda and indeed to the whole unhappy situation in Ethiopia which goes beyond human rights into a number of other areas which are regrettable from our point of view.

● (1440)

As to the Belgrade conference, if I may conclude the answer to a "tripartite" question, I have had consultations in Belgrade with the head of the Canadian delegation. The meetings will very likely continue until the end of this month and it is not clear at the moment what kind of agenda will be devised. I will be glad to consult with members of the foreign affairs committee as to the best means of informing members, and whatever means they decide will be perfectly all right with me.

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TRANSPORT

CUTBACK IN RAIL PASSENGER SERVICE IN NOVA SCOTIA—
INQUIRY AS TO OPPOSITION BY PREMIER REGAN

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, my question for the Minister of Transport relates to a memorandum he circulated, dated May 25. He indicated in the memorandum, and in a copy of a telex enclosed, that he and the four Atlantic premiers had agreed in principle, among other things, to a cutback in rail services in the provinces concerned. Since Premier Regan a few days ago told a committee from Sydney Academy that he was not only surprised but shocked at the minister's memorandum, and promised to make his feelings known to the minister, may I ask if Premier Regan has been in touch with the minister, to indicate his strong opposition to any possible rail passenger cutback in Nova Scotia; if so, when did such a message from Premier Regan arrive?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I received a telegram from Premier Regan but am not sure of the exact date. It seems to me I got it within the last several days. In it he indicated a view about rail passenger service in Nova Scotia different from that contained in earlier agreements between ourselves. Naturally, I shall pursue the matter. The telegram had specific reference to one rail service.

RAIL PASSENGER SERVICE BETWEEN SYDNEY AND TRURO—
SUPPORT OF ATLANTIC PREMIERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO
TRANSPORT COMMISSION

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, may I try on another question for size? Has the minister, through his officials or representatives of the department, submitted a recommendation to the Canadian Transport Commission concerning the abandonment of CN passenger rail service between Sydney and Truro? Did such a recommendation contain the names of the Atlantic premiers, including that of Premier Regan?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, as the House knows from past exchanges, and the announce-