

*Oral Questions*

currently more exposed than the Canadian forces but would be subject to UNPROFOR command and therefore would be available for the protection of all.

This Saturday the defence ministers of the NATO contributing countries will be meeting to discuss other ways we can reprofile the positioning of military forces in Bosnia with respect to fully discharging the UNPROFOR mandate.

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, Lord Owen, the chief European negotiator in Bosnia, who is himself withdrawing from this war torn country, argues that if there is no peace settlement by autumn then UN forces will be forced to leave Bosnia.

Given the circumstances and that Canada's commitment to Bosnia ends in September, will the government assure Canadians today that after three and a half long years in Bosnia all our troops will be home with their families by fall or sooner?

**Hon. David M. Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with respect to Lord Owen, we do regret very much that he now feels unable to continue with his duties. He has done outstanding work, but it is frustrating and very demanding.

However, we still believe that a negotiated settlement to this problem is the answer, not a military solution. We will not be moved by any deadlines set by anyone, whether it is the Bosnian Serbs or any other party.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**SINGER**

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour.

Former workers at Singer are arguing that the federal government did not fulfill its contract obligations toward them because it gave the company, instead of them, the Government Annuities Account surplus, that is a part of their pension funds that it was responsible for administering.

Does the Minister of Labour not agree that the contract binding the parties between 1946 and 1957 is abundantly clear and that the federal government had an obligation to pay the surplus out to the workers and not to Singer?

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Labour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, all the federal regulations have been applied in this matter.

• (1435)

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of difficulty accepting the minister's answer. She is

responsible for the No Committee in Quebec and is also my former neighbour in the riding of Saint-Jean. The average age of the 600 workers at Singer is 80 years and 250 of them are already dead. So, answers are needed urgently and must be specific.

When is the minister going to commit to table in the House all the documentation with respect to this issue, so that we can assist these workers in their search for justice?

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Labour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, within the labour program of the Department of Human Resource Development, we always work to make sure that the rights and responsibilities of workers, as well as employers, are respected, and in so doing, we apply the Canada Labour Code with respect to the parties involved. That is the day-to-day job of the labour program officials.

\* \* \*

[English]

**GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS**

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the justice minister.

Yesterday I pointed out that three law firms with very tight connections to the revenue minister had been appointed. The revenue minister has said that he was not troubled by the appearance of patronage, saying: "I am not concerned. I think merit is the primary consideration for an appointment".

Does the justice minister not think that a \$4,000 contribution to the revenue minister's election campaign might have been the real consideration?

**The Speaker:** My colleagues, it would seem to me that the question does not deal with the administrative responsibility of the government. It is more of a party matter.

That question I would rule out of order unless the member can rephrase the question so that it deals with the administrative responsibility of a minister of the government.

**Mr. Abbott:** Mr. Speaker, I can redefine it this way. In making appointments of law firms to work for the justice department, my understanding is that the justice minister would go to the minister or some Liberal in that area.

Does he not think that when considerations such as I put forward come into play it calls into question the ability of the justice department to be able to put the very best law firms at the beck and call of the Canadian people, instead of it going to the drug dealers who can afford to buy the best?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when the government goes to the legal profession to hire agents to help us with legal cases the fundamental criterion is competence and merit. That is as true in