

Oral Questions

● (1430)

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member that NATO's proposals will be carried out. There is, of course, some resistance from soldiers unwilling to follow the directives of political representatives, but the Serb, Muslim and Croatian authorities have assured us of the desire to reach a negotiated peace. We hope that political will prevail over the stubbornness of a few soldiers in the field.

Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg): Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the minister of defence promised on January 13, Canadian peacekeepers in Srebrenica have not been relieved within the 30-day deadline. Are we to understand that they will not be relieved by Dutch troops before the deadline set by NATO?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure this House that the procedures put in place to allow Dutch troops to relieve Canadian peacekeepers are moving slowly but surely. Over 15 Dutch soldiers and representatives are already in Srebrenica. The military equipment needed by the troops is already in Split and we think that, in the next few days or weeks, the troops will be relieved as agreed between the parties.

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[English]

PHYSICIAN ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Yesterday the Prime Minister confirmed he would allow a free vote in this House on the issue of physician assisted suicide.

Does the Prime Minister mean by a free vote that a member of this House has the freedom to vote according to the member's wishes or beliefs, or that the member will vote according to the wishes of the member's constituents?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, in the House of Commons there is only one vote, that of the member. The member will vote according to his or her conscience. That is all.

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Prime Minister for his answer. However, it does not satisfy me.

Euthanasia was not an issue in the election last fall. Yesterday the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell told Radio Canada that he will vote his own belief on this issue rather than those of his constituents.

Will the Prime Minister allow all Canadians to freely vote their own beliefs on this deeply personal issue at the next election in a national referendum?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we were elected to use our best judgment. On a couple of occasions, when I voted on abortion and on capital punishment, I knew I was voting according to my own judgment and it was not very popular in my riding.

We are elected and as members of Parliament we have the privilege to attend committees to discuss matters freely. We then make up our own minds and the people can replace us at election time.

This notion that we should be replaced by polling is revolting to me. We are elected to use our best judgment. If the member thinks she cannot do that, be recalled.

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[Translation]

SOCIAL AND CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides): Mr. Speaker, on May 5, 1993, the present Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was then in the opposition, stated that the government was violating the basic right of the people to adequate and decent housing and demanded that it "act as soon as possible to save the social housing and co-operative housing program in Canada".

● (1435)

Can the member, now Minister of Foreign Affairs, tell us whether he has acted as strongly as he was advocating less than a year ago and approached his colleague, the Minister of Finance, to that effect?

[English]

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether the question is appropriate because the subject matter will be dealt with later in the day as an opposition motion.

I wish to inform the hon. member that all my colleagues on this side of the House have immense interest in the subject matter of social housing. We have been working diligently with the Minister of Finance, as we have been working with other levels of governments, both provincial and municipal, to determine new ways of finding additional moneys in order to address the serious problem of social housing.

[Translation]

The Speaker: I must tell the hon. member, before she asks her next question, that I allowed the minister to answer the question, even though we are going to have a debate on this this afternoon. Your supplementary, please.

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides): Mr. Speaker, before the budget preparation is over, can the Minister of Public Works