

glad that the Reform Party is supporting what we are doing in terms of streamlining the Canadian Armed Forces from top to bottom. I welcome that.

The previous government did announce a reduction at the general officer level by 20 per cent in 1991 and that has now gone through the system. We announced, consequential to the white paper and from the budget, that there would be a further reduction of 25 per cent at the general officer level and 20 per cent of the colonels.

Contrary to what the hon. member said, this does bring us more into line with our NATO allies with respect to the officer to general ranks ratio.

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, let us take a look at that.

Currently we have 12 generals per 10,000 troops in the Canadian Armed Forces. The United States and Germany have 5 generals per 10,000 troops in their forces. With the government's reductions that ratio will change to 11 generals per 10,000 troops.

Does the minister really expect the Canadian people to believe this is a cut at the top?

Hon. David Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned two countries in which their armed forces are structured somewhat differently with respect to the way the general officers are apportioned in their tasks. However, he did not mention other countries in the NATO alliance in comparison with which we have a better ratio.

* * *

URANIUM

Mr. Morris Bodnar (Saskatoon—Dundurn, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, uranium production employs hundreds of Canadians in Saskatchewan and other parts of Canada. Exports to the United States last year amounted to \$500 million.

The industry has been concerned that recent U.S. arrangements with Russia might threaten to destabilize the U.S. uranium market by providing for U.S. imports of large quantities of low cost Russian uranium.

Would the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade advise the House what steps his minister is taking to protect the Canadian uranium exports to the United States.

Mr. Mac Harb (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have taken vigorous action on this issue. Back in March 1994 we initiated consultations with the United States on this issue. Our motives are to ensure that the export of Russian uranium to the United States does not unfairly discriminate against uranium exports to the United States. We were given assurances by the Americans that would not be the case.

Oral Questions

Throughout it all we have worked closely with the industry in Canada. We are pleased to report that the outcome was a very positive one. We will continue to monitor the situation very closely. It is our hope that it will be an open and fair market for all concerned.

* * *

OLD AGE SECURITY

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke, P.C.): Mr. Speaker, I want to return to an issue that I and my colleague raised earlier this week in the House of Commons. It has to do with old age security benefits.

The Deputy Prime Minister answered unequivocally that old age security benefits would not affect women who are 65 and older even though the budget plan, a government document, states unequivocally that the basic principles for reforming OAS shall be the provision of OAS benefits on the basis of family income.

• (1150)

How does the government square that response with the stated principle in this document? If that is the answer, what then does the document mean?

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member raises an important question. It is for this reason, as he well knows, that the federal government will be meeting with provincial counterparts in the fall to discuss the issue of pensions.

It is interesting the hon. member would mention the principles but would not speak to the fact that some of the principles include undiminished protection for the less well off seniors, greater progressivity of benefits by income level and control of program costs.

Pensions are a very important part of this government's generous and compassionate approach toward social security.

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke, P.C.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad my hon. colleague referred to a meeting the government will have with the provinces. I assume this is not improvised and that the government will have prepared.

Are the hon. member and the government ready to table here in the House of Commons studies and documents that the Government of Canada will have prepared with projections on what the application of this principle of applying OAS benefits to family income would have?

I want a clear answer. Will the government, yes or no, table all the documents it has prepared for this meeting?

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am quite surprised that the member, being a former