

Oral Questions

taken by the Government on acid rain since the time I asked the question of the Prime Minister, I wonder if the House of Commons could not be told what the Prime Minister will be asking of President Reagan with respect to American action on acid rain when he meets with him in Quebec city.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I think the Hon. Member would want to have the House recall more precisely what the Prime Minister said. He said that if there were to be consultations with anyone prior to discussions with United States officials, he would probably choose someone other than the Hon. Member. The point that has to be made—

Mr. Deans: That wasn't what he said. It's interesting, but that wasn't what he said.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): He was a little more definitive than I was.

We hope that the actions that have been taken under the very strong leadership of my colleague, the Minister of the Environment, to demonstrate our determination to move on the acid rain question, will allow Canada to go to those meetings with clean hands so that we can increase the influence of Canada's arguments in order to try to reach an agreement that will reduce the danger to Canadian and American lakes and livelihoods posed by the threat of acid rain.

CANADIAN POSITION

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg-Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, given the former Prime Minister's occasional words about respect for Parliament and respect for Members of Parliament, I would have thought that he would have been the first to say that Members of Parliament have a right to know and ask about what position the Prime Minister will take.

May I ask the Secretary of State just what action the Government will be seeking from the Americans with respect to acid rain? Could I have the assurance that we will not simply agree to any kind of joint or mutual study of the problem? This would be to retreat from the position already taken by the Government that action is needed, and would involve conceding to the American view that more research rather than action is needed. Do we have the assurance that we will be seeking action and not mutual study?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is a member of the committee studying parliamentary reform and procedures. It will be making reports to the House. A question that it may raise is whether or not treaties and agreements should be approved by the House in advance of their signing, and another question it may raise is the rather unusual proposal the Hon. Member is putting forward now, that before we go into an open negotiating procedure we should tell the people

with whom we are negotiating exactly what it is that we seek. I think that would very seriously undermine our negotiating stance, if not with the United States then certainly with other countries.

With regard to the acid rain question more particularly, the historic difference in views between Canada and the United States is clear. We believe there does not need to be more research. We believe there must be action taken. We believe that we can be persuasive in seeking action by taking action ourselves. My colleague, the Minister of the Environment, has shown leadership by having Canada take action. We hope that at the meeting between the President and the Prime Minister in Quebec city this weekend and next Monday, we will be able to get some solid progress against the threat of acid rain put into action.

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NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

CANADIAN COMMITMENT

Mr. Don Ravis (Saskatoon East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Defence whom I would like to congratulate on his recent appointment. Today the Government announced measures regarding the strengthening of Canada's conventional commitment to NATO. Can the Minister advise the House of the implications of that announcement, and can he advise the House whether there will be any consideration of future augmentation to Canadian forces in Europe?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, the Government has taken two immediate initiatives with respect to a commitment made by the former Minister of National Defence at the NATO meeting last December. The first of these will involve increasing the number of our troops in Europe by 1,200 military personnel, in order to strengthen the Fourth Canadian Mechanized Brigade group based in Lahr. The second measure will be to designate specifically an infantry battalion group in Canada to fulfil our commitment to AMF land. Both of these commitments have been announced today to the ambassadors of the countries of NATO.

With these initial measures, we hope to increase the effectiveness and contribution of our Canadian forces in Europe. The objective, of course, is to meet fully our commitments to NATO, as we have often said we would do.

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HUMAN RIGHTS

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION—ROLE OF CROWN CORPORATIONS

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to my Hon. friend, the Minister of Employment and Immigration. The Minister knows that the provisions of the Canadian Human Rights Act on affirmative