

Oral Questions

can continue to work with the provinces and over time, after examining the documents in detail and recognizing the positive benefits, we hope that the Premiers will all come onside.

ENERGY—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, the words of the Premier of Prince Edward Island were quite clear when he stated the Premiers "were never told energy was on the table. It was not discussed". Now the Deputy Prime Minister is claiming that energy was under discussion. Is he suggesting that the Premier of Prince Edward Island was lying? If he is not suggesting that, could he stand up in the House and clear up once and for all the confusion and the confabulation that have surrounded the Government's selling job, both with respect to provincial involvement, and also with respect to the link between higher drug prices in this country and a sell-out to the Americans in the so-called free trade debate?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I am not prepared to comment upon the confusion in the mind of the Hon. Member. But I can say to her that I am advised that the Premiers were briefed on the energy situation not once, but twice, and on several occasions. That was part and parcel of the briefing, as I understand it, and as I am informed.

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APARTHEID

SOUTH AFRICA—AID TO FRONT-LINE STATES

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister, and it has to do with Canada's policy towards South Africa and apartheid.

Can the Deputy Prime Minister clarify for the House, and for the Canadian people, what type of aid the Government has in mind when it talks about aid to the front-line states?

Can the Deputy Prime Minister assure the House, on behalf of the Government and the Prime Minister, that any new emphasis on aid to the front-line states will not be used as an alternative to or a substitute for tough economic action against South Africa?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Guy Hudon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member knows, I believe, that an important conference is under way in Vancouver, and it would be inappropriate at this stage either to put forward a new position or confirm any previous one. Mr. Speaker, members attending the Conference are there to discuss, and the future will show those discussions to have been fruitful.

[*English*]

ECONOMIC SANCTIONS—COMMONWEALTH CONFERENCE

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, it would be appropriate if the Deputy Prime Minister could speak for the Government. The Prime Minister has made it clear in the past that Canada would be prepared to invoke complete economic sanctions against South Africa. He has also made it clear that, in his view, there are limits to unanimity.

I wish to ask the Deputy Prime Minister, does he not think, at this time when the leaders of the Commonwealth countries are meeting here in Canada that, if there is failure to get collective economic action with respect to South Africa, this would be the time for Canada to show the leadership that the Prime Minister has done a lot of talking about, and make it clear that Canada is prepared to go it alone with respect to comprehensive economic sanctions against South Africa.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I think the position of the Canadian Government is very clear. The Prime Minister reiterated that position last night on the CBC interview. I would invite the Hon. Member to read it, because it clearly restates the position and strategy involved. As the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary indicated, there is—

Ms. Copps: What about C-22?

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, if the Hon. Member for Hamilton East continues to involve herself in all matters related to questions in the House of Commons, rather than sitting back and listening, perhaps that is the manner in which she would like to see Question Period run.

Mr. Blaikie: I am listening.

Mr. Mazankowski: I appreciate the remark of the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Birds Hill.

With respect to aid for the front-line states, the Prime Minister again made it very clear, and I quote, "They need assistance to help them rebuild rail lines, their port system, their transportation and communication links. They need aid for human suffering, and they need military aid. Canada's preoccupation is with the first part of that equation. We believe that it is consistent with our traditions and our objectives and our expertise and our wishes for the region that we help in the infrastructure development, helping human beings, helping transportation, ports, rail lines, and so on as opposed to the military implications".

We are not offering any military aid. That is very clear and unequivocal. It is a different position from that taken by the NDP Party.