

S.O. 43

The Government of Canada has been very concerned about what has been happening in and around Poland in recent months. Of course the Canadian people themselves have been concerned. In fact there has been an enormous outpouring of support from the Canadian people, not only from Canadians of Polish ancestry but from Canadians of many other ancestries, which is typical of this country, to the Poles. There have been many contributions of food, and many contributions of money to enable food and medicines to be sent to Poland. The Government of Canada has joined in that and recently announced the contribution of \$100,000 to the Canadian Polish Congress to enable food and medicines and any other useful materials to be sent to the Polish people.

Aid of that kind, of course, is distributed in Poland by non-governmental organizations but, generally speaking, the Canadian government has to deal with the Polish government, so the greater part of the aid we have sent to the Polish people has been sent through the Polish government. We have in fact been the largest per capita donors to the people of Poland. Our contributions have been principally through our sales of grain at concessional rates.

On October 29 Canada announced that it would provide an additional \$500 million in credit guarantees in order to permit Poland to continue to import the one million to 1.5 million tonnes of grain provided for in our bilateral grain agreement which expires in December, 1982. Food credits announced by other countries, such as the United States, do not go beyond this year, whereas ours go through this year into next year. We are already in the position of having fulfilled some of the requirements of that contract by having shipped something like one third of the grain which is provided for under the framework agreement. We intend to continue to provide support of that kind to the Polish people.

The Canadian banks have also made a contribution to Poland in recent years. These banks are participating along with other world banks in negotiations with Poland to reschedule payments for 1981.

It is my understanding that these negotiations are still in process, but at this stage it is not clear what the outcome of them will be. Undoubtedly there will be further word on that within the next several weeks. It is not our intention, as I suggested in this House the other day, to suspend any form of our assistance to Poland at this time.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacGuigan: It may be all very well for some countries which have different policies to suspend the application of those different policies, but it is not our policy to hurt the Polish people in any way in this time of difficulty for them by suspending our shipments of grain to them. We do not think that would be in their best interests.

As I understand this resolution, it would urge us to do even more than has been done up to this time, even though we are the largest per capita donor.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. MacGuigan: I might say that it would not be possible for us to ensure that our aid be given through non-governmental organizations as the motion requests—

Mr. Nielsen: Talk it out!

Madam Speaker: Order, please. It being 2.15 p.m. it is my duty now to interrupt the debate. Oral questions.

An hon. Member: Put the question.

Mr. Nielsen: Madam Speaker, I am sure there is consent to put the question.

Madam Speaker: Oral questions.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

● (1415)

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, as an officer of the House I would appeal to Your Honour, I believe with the agreement of the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacGuigan), to extend, by the time necessary to allow a vote to be taken, the period for Standing Order 43 motions.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Madam Speaker: I am not at liberty to do that unless the House gives me unanimous consent.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

Madam Speaker: No. Oral questions.

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, I very deeply regret that the Secretary of State for External Affairs said no to the request by Madam Speaker for unanimous consent.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. We are on oral questions. Certainly, the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) realizes that.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

POLAND—SAFETY OF CANADIAN NATIONALS

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs whose refusal of unanimous consent to a motion which would have allowed this whole House to go on record in relation to a situation which is of grave concern to all