

*Oral Questions***NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION**UNITED STATES STRATEGIC DEFENCE INITIATIVE—REQUEST
FOR COMMITTEE REFERRAL

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister and has to do with star wars. In view of the fact that there is confusion, not only here but in the U.S. and in Europe, with respect to this research and its horrendous implications, would the Deputy Prime Minister be prepared to submit the issue of Canada's entry into a research agreement with the United States to the appropriate House committee so that parliamentarians would have some very significant input into the Government's ultimate decision?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Well, consistent with our desire, unlike the previous Government, to see matters of significant import such as this one obtain the fullest possible public discussion, of course we would want to generate House input, and the input of the standing committee and others. But in the final analysis it is the committee itself which will have to make that kind of request, rather than us imposing an agenda on the committee. Certainly if such a request is received, it will be given every consideration.

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): I thank the Hon. Minister for his answer. I have to assume that if a committee did request a House order he would not oppose it. I assume that is the substance of his answer.

CANADIAN SUPPORT

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, I have a very brief supplementary. The Prime Minister has been quoted as saying that a majority of Canadians are supportive of the SDI concept. I would like to know what evidence the Government has to support that assertion, and would it please table it?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): To answer the first part of the question first, if the committee comes to the conclusion that it wishes to examine this or any other current matter in the public domain and before Parliament, we would expect to receive a request from the committee when it is considering what kind of reference it wishes to have. It would be at that point that we could give the matter attention. I would suggest that the logical point to start would be in the committee itself, in the steering committee.

With respect to the larger question of support or non-support for the specific research program of SDI, we are well aware that there are significant political and strategic implications to the research program which, in all probability, certainly judging from the questions from the Official Opposition and from what I have read, really have not gone to the core of the issue. It would seem to me to be most important for Members to be conducting that kind of dialogue in committee rather than in the House of Commons.

CANADA POST CORPORATION

HIRING OF MAIL CARRIERS

Mr. Peter Elzinga (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Revenue who is responsible for the Post Office. As the Minister is aware, because of questions put to him previously, there are persons in Canada Post who are indicating there will not be additional mail carriers hired. I look to the Minister for the assurance that this will not be the case, so that all Canadians are treated equally and growth areas in Canada will be provided an "essential service", as it is labelled by Treasury Board.

● (1440)

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Revenue): Did you ever notice, Mr. Speaker, that if you really want to get a tough question you have to go to this side of the House?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Beatty: I know that Members on all sides of the House share the Hon. Member's priority for providing the best possible service to postal customers. Obviously there is a trade-off which the Post Office has to make at a time when a massive deficit is being run. The Post Office will be coming before the parliamentary committee to defend its Estimates. At that time perhaps the Hon. Member, and others, could raise these matters and give the Post Office their guidance on where the priorities should lie.

There is some allocation in the Budget this year for increased service to households, as well.

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ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

PREMIER'S TRIAL—INTERNAL INVESTIGATION

Mr. John Nunziata (York South-Weston): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Solicitor General, and it concerns the Richard Hatfield affair.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nunziata: Hon. Members wanted a tough question, and I am going to give them a tough question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nunziata: Canadians are still waiting for answers. They are waiting for the internal RCMP investigation into the Hatfield affair. On Tuesday of this week we learned that this internal report is substantially complete. However, we were shocked to learn that Premier Hatfield was not personally interviewed in the course of the investigation.

In view of the very serious allegations made by Premier Hatfield concerning the conduct of the RCMP, accusing the RCMP of being a party to a conspiracy to overthrow him and his Government, would the Solicitor General not agree that it