

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

[English]

DISARMAMENT

REPORTED PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH DISARMAMENT GROUP TO MEET EAST GERMAN OFFICIALS

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put my first question to the Acting Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Has the Canadian Government authorized the establishment of a disarmament group composed of Canadians who, in turn, will meet with such East German officials as appear to be appropriate, as reported in press accounts coming from Europe with respect to the Prime Minister's European trip?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am not aware that any specific group has been established to meet with our counterparts in Eastern Europe. I did glance at that press report myself this morning, but I did not infer from it even as much as the Hon. Member, namely, that there has been a group established which intended to meet. Certainly that decision has not been taken.

DISCUSSION OF PROPOSAL

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel): Mr. Speaker, my next question is also for the Acting Prime Minister. Would the Acting Prime Minister indicate to the House, if the group has not been established, have there been discussions within the Canadian Government with respect to the setting up of such a group? In turn, have NATO allies been asked what their reaction would be if such a group were established?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I presume that a dialogue has already been firmly agreed to. For example, at the recent meeting of NATO foreign ministers, Ministers, having succeeded in their policy during 1983 of carrying out deployment successfully, had sent a message to the Warsaw Pact countries that they were prepared for an open and comprehensive dialogue. Certainly any talks that now take place between the Soviet Union and the United States and members of NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries would be thoroughly consistent with policy established at the December meeting of NATO. Therefore, I do not think the Hon. Member should be apprehensive about a development along those lines, if it did occur. It would be quite consistent with NATO policy.

INQUIRY WHETHER NATO ALLIES CONSULTED

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel): Mr. Speaker, I have another question, again for the Acting Prime Minister, who seems to resist answering my very simple question. Is such a group contemplated? Have there been discussions within the Canadian Government with respect to setting up such a

group? Have the NATO allies, in fact, been asked whether it is acceptable to them, and is it acceptable to them?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member refers to an expression "such a group". Such a group remains rather vague in his definition. Using that vague framework in which he puts the questions, the answer to every one of them is no.

* * *

NATIONAL REVENUE

ISSUANCE OF PRESS RELEASE—INCLUSION OF INNOCENT PERSONS' NAMES

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of National Revenue. He will know that earlier this week his Department issued a press release designed to publicize the prosecutions of people who have been convicted of tax evasion and other similar offences. Why did the Minister's Department decide to drag through the mud the names of innocent people, who were acquitted, by including their names on this list?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member's question refers to a practice that has been in existence for a long time within the Department, and he is asking why we add the names of people who have been acquitted. This has also been common practice, and the reason is that if the individual in question has suffered from the publicity around the fact that a charge... was laid, it should also be publicized that his innocence was recognized through his acquittal by the court. However, I would like to add for the benefit of the Hon. Member and the Members of this House that there is a special Task Force within the Department's Information Division, part of whose mandate will be to review our information practices, and the practice of publicizing convictions and acquittals by the courts will also be examined.

● (1420)

[English]

Mr. Beatty: The Minister talks about publicizing the fact that these people were found innocent. The heading on his news release was "107 Tax Evaders prosecuted by Revenue Canada, Taxation", not "Innocent People are Freed" or "Department Makes a Mistake". These people are entitled to an apology from the Minister, not this sort of treatment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

REQUEST THAT MINISTER TENDER APOLOGY

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, will these innocent people who have been put through