

September 10 by the Department of External Affairs on export control policy states:

When a class of goods is not clearly and uniquely either military or civilian, there will be Ministerial consultation. Helicopters are an example.

Was the Secretary of State or the Cabinet consulted on the decision to sell helicopter engine parts to the Ayatollah regime in Iran since they could clearly be used for military purposes? Should this decision not have been made at the highest level of Government? Why was a decision made to sell to Iran at that point in time?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I am advised that this was approved by officials in the normal course of doing business in this manner. We have been assured by Pratt & Whitney that the spare parts for the engines involved for the Bell 212 helicopter are commercially configured. The company has also stated that the power required for a military helicopter is much greater than that of the Bell 212 and that the engines in question, the PT6 T-3, could not be used for the Cobra helicopter without very major changes in the configuration of the unit itself, something that could not have been accomplished in Iran.

CANADIAN DEFENCE PRODUCTS GUIDE

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I have here a copy of the *Canadian Defence Products Guide*, a document put out by the Department of External Affairs. This document clearly points out that the engine to which the Deputy Prime Minister just referred is advertised for military purposes and for use in the Cobra gunship. Do I assume that the Government does not read its own documents, or do I assume that there was another reason the export permits were given authorizing Pratt & Whitney to sell to Iran? How can you justify your own document advertising that engine and then not—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Hon. Member knows it is improper to address the Minister with the word "you". I would ask him to rephrase the remainder of his question.

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister, through you, how the Government can justify a decision to sell those parts to Iran when its own document clearly specifies that they can be sold and used for military purposes?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I would submit to the Hon. Member that again we have been assured that this was a commercially oriented transaction. There have been cases where permit applications have been refused. When spare parts for engines used in the Cobra helicopter were requested, those requests were turned down. Where there is a clear case of spare parts being used for military purposes, the export permit requests are turned down. As a matter of fact one such request occurred in January of 1985. I think both the

Oral Questions

Department and the Minister have carried out the spirit if not the letter of the guidelines to which the Hon. Member refers.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL REVENUE

STOLEN INFORMATION—PROTECTION OF TAXPAYERS— GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Revenue. We know now that personal information on sixteen million taxpayers is in the hands of a thief. This is a very serious situation. My question to the Minister is as follows: What exactly does the Government intend to do to protect the taxpayers?

[English]

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, without being evasive, I am not able to say specifically, and I believe he would not be able to either, that the data is in the hands of thieves. It may well be that it is but we do not know that, and that is as much as I can tell him about the investigation that is proceeding.

What can be done? There are additional safeguards being implemented. If I were to tell the Hon. Member what they were, that would be to some extent counterproductive. I can assure him, as I have assured the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition, that we have taken this matter very seriously, as indeed we must and we should. We have asked the RCMP to evaluate the procedures which up to now have been satisfactory in keeping this kind of data sacrosanct. I have directed that there be an intensive review. We have notified other Departments and provinces and we will take every measure possible to make certain that this information does not do any damage.

USE OF SOCIAL INSURANCE NUMBERS

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, the Minister knows that access to this information can be very dangerous indeed regarding the invasion of privacy. A member of my staff, for example, phoned the Toronto-Dominion Bank over the noon hour and simply gave the bank a Social Insurance Number plus a name. That member of my staff was told that that particular person's credit rating could be produced. That is alarming in terms of its potential impact on some 16 million Canadians who now know that that information is in the hands of someone. I want to ask the Minister very specifically what he is doing to inform all those directly affected by this very serious situation what they should be doing to protect themselves?

• (1425)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!