

QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

CANADA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION REDUCTION OF GOVERNMENT'S SHAREHOLDING

Hon. Duff Roblin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I originally intended to ask a question of the Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board, but I see he is not with us at the moment. Consequently, I will ask the Minister of State for Economic Development a question about the Canada Development Corporation. The original plan under the Canada Development Corporation was that the government's shareholding, which I think now amounts to 49 per cent, was, over the course of time, to be reduced to 10 per cent. Is this still the policy of the government, and, if so, when does he expect to give effect to it.

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of State for Economic Development): Honourable senators, I shall have to take that question as notice. If a decision has been reached as to when some of the shareholding will be offered privately to the public, I will try to bring that information back to the chamber quickly.

Senator Roblin: While my honourable friend is looking into that matter, could he also inform the Senate whether the undertaking, which I believe was given by the Prime Minister to the Canada Development Corporation, that the government would not interfere in the corporation's affairs, still holds good?

Senator Olson: I can take that part of the question as notice too, but I would think that, yes, that is still the obligation of this government.

Senator Roblin: I am anxious to receive the information because I have seen a number of press reports that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce is studying possible ways and means of changing the operation of the CDC so that it may play a role in the manufacturing sector similar to that played by Petro-Canada in the energy sector. It seems to me that if that policy change is being contemplated, the chances of the undertaking holding good on the two points I previously mentioned are probably in question.

I really want to find out what the government's intention is on this matter because I notice that, according to press reports, Mr. Hampson, the head of the CDC, is quoted as saying that he has heard nothing from the minister in question with respect to new plans for that corporation. Would the minister take all that into account when replying to my question?

Senator Olson: I will take that all into account. However, if my honourable friend is seeking an assurance that we are not contemplating anything, the position is, and always has been, that when some changes are to take place, announcements will be made.

• (2015)

Senator Roblin: Honourable senators, I appreciate the point my friend is making. I am really not asking for any specula-

tion, but for a statement on the government's policy with respect to its shareholding in the company, and with respect to the Prime Minister's undertaking and other matters. As my honourable friend is quite aware, the stock in this company is also held by the general public. We have all these newspaper reports about the future of the Canadian Development Corporation, and it seems to me that the government should come clean and let us know what it intends to do.

Senator Smith: It probably doesn't know itself. You are asking a lot.

Senator Roblin: I appreciate that, but I think my honourable friend opposite may have trouble answering in the near future with respect to this matter.

THE CONSTITUTION

DATE OF PATRIATION

Hon. Duff Roblin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I have a question for the Leader of the Government about the Special Joint Committee on the Constitution. Recent statements have been made by the Prime Minister to the effect that he still holds to July 1, 1981, as the date by which all matters before the committee, including the patriation of the Constitution, will be finalized. I ask the leader if this is indeed the government's intention, and, if so, does the Prime Minister intend to adhere to it whether or not the cases now before the courts are reported by that time?

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, the government is still hopeful that the original time-frame targetted by the Right Honourable the Prime Minister can be met. If there is any change, parliamentarians will be advised in due course.

Senator Roblin: That is really not the thrust of my question, as I think my honourable friend appreciates very well. The thrust of my question is: Does the government intend to adhere to that date, regardless of whether or not the applications before the courts are dealt with by that time?

Senator Perrault: Honourable senators, the balance of the question will be taken as notice.

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

POLAND—MASSING OF RUSSIAN TROOPS ON BORDERS—THREAT TO WORLD PEACE—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Martial Asselin: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government. The Canadian people are very concerned about the situation in Poland. The Polish people have opposed passive resistance to the government by creating independent labour unions, but we now learn that the Russians are massing troops along the borders and are getting ready to invade the country.

I would like to know what diplomatic action Canada has taken to communicate the opinion of Canadians to the Soviet Union and what discussions are going on in NATO at the