

Point of Order—Mr. McGrath

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, the hon. member, the former housing critic for the official opposition in this chamber, must know, without my telling him, that CMHC is not in the business of direct insurance or direct lending.

An hon. Member: That's not the question.

Mr. Cosgrove: It is in the business of insuring other lenders who provide other money. As I have indicated, some lenders do provide mortgage funds, and some do not.

An hon. Member: What about penalty?

Mr. Cosgrove: We have taken advantage of suggesting companies to those people who have not been able to find available funds. We have given the names of other companies which are providing mortgage funds.

Madam Speaker: A single question for the hon. member for Regina East.

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CULTURAL AFFAIRS

NEGOTIATION OF NEW FUNDING AGREEMENT ON FRIENDSHIP CENTRES

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State. As the minister knows, the Native Friendship Centres which operate in many cities across Canada comprise one of the most successful programs of Indian and Metis people. Funding for the centres is arranged, in part, through a five-year agreement with the federal government. I want to ask the minister why he has so far refused, since becoming the Secretary of State, to meet with representatives from the National Association of Friendship Centres. I would like to know if he is willing to meet with them and to begin the negotiations for a new agreement.

Hon. Gerald Regan (Secretary of State): Madam Speaker, I want to express my agreement with the hon. member that the Friendship Centres have provided very, very important assistance to native people moving into our urban areas, and that the program of the government in support of those Friendship Centres over the past five years, on the whole, has been one of our most successful programs. I only want to say to the hon. member that my department is reviewing the program in relation to any way there could be improvements in any succeeding programs. When we come to conclusions as a result of that study, we will certainly be communicating a proposed course of action to representatives of the native people so we can hear their comments in advance of taking any firm decision.

• (1500)

DISASTERS

SINKING OF "OCEAN RANGER"—INVESTIGATION OF BALLAST PROBLEM

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. I understand that inspectors from the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources visited the *Ocean Ranger* twice in the last month to investigate a ballast problem. Will the minister indicate whether that is the case? If it was the case, will he indicate to the House what those inspectors reported?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I cannot confirm whether there was a visit twice in the last two months. As I indicated, I am informed that an inspector was there in the last two weeks. I will certainly inquire as to the content of the report, if there was a written report or a report of any kind. I will be very happy to inform the Leader of the Opposition.

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PRIVILEGE

MR. WADDELL—SINKING OF "OCEAN RANGER"

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver-Kingsway): Madam Speaker, I have a question of privilege arising out of the question period. The minister half announced an inquiry into the Hibernia disaster. I say half announced because he said he would announce an inquiry at a press conference. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) indicated that there may be a report with respect to a federal inspection of the *Ocean Ranger*.

My question of privilege is twofold. First, the announcement of an inquiry should be made in this House. It is our privilege to hear that announcement and to comment on it, rather than have it announced at a press conference. Second—

Madam Speaker: Order. That point does not constitute a question of privilege. If the hon. member wants to debate the question, that is perfectly legitimate, but he cannot do it after the question period by asking to be recognized on a question of privilege.

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order on virtually the same subject. What could be happening here today is contributing to disorder. There is provision made in our Standing Orders for ministerial statements. Today we were given a half commitment that there will be an inquiry announced into the tragedy surrounding the sinking of the *Ocean Ranger* and that this inquiry will be announced outside the House at a press conference. That creates disorder—not privilege, disorder.

I do not know, Madam Speaker, if you would permit me to do so, but if you would I would ask the Minister of Energy,