

Oral Questions

Canada, and did he know there was a change in the marketing operations?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the intervention of the governor of the bank yesterday was to make sure that the market would operate in an orderly fashion. That is the policy of the government; it has not changed, and it is still the policy today. I have absolutely nothing further to reply. Unfortunately, I do not know why the hon. member finds a contradiction in that statement. I did nothing to contradict myself, and was quite open with the House on this subject.

Mr. Nowlan: Mr. Speaker, the reason I was glad to be recognized by Your Honour was that the minister mentioned that he loves the House. If he loves the House of Commons, he must respect it and therefore tell the truth to the House. I ask the minister to answer my question and not ramble around it.

● (1452)

My simple question is this: When the minister made the statement to the House of Commons yesterday, had he met with the governor of the Bank of Canada, and did he know there had been a change in the orderly marketing conditions that he said were going to remain the same?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I stated a while ago that I had met the governor of the Bank of Canada on Monday and Tuesday. I even met him again at noon today at a purely social function, not to discuss business matters. The governor of the Bank of Canada intervened yesterday afternoon in the marketplace just as he always does, because it is his responsibility to make sure that the market operates in an orderly fashion, to ward off the effects of undue speculation. Such has been the government's policy. It will remain unchanged, although our tactics may vary from day to day.

[*English*]

Mr. Nowlan: A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, this question is very important, and I am not trying to use too many adjectives. At the time the minister met with the governor, was he advised by the governor that the bank was going to become an aggressive buyer of Canadian dollars and there was going to be a change in policy? If that advice was given, was it given before the minister gave his answer in the House yesterday?

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I do not know who told the hon. member that the bank was an aggressive buyer: they were intervening yesterday, as they do regularly, to ensure that the market operates in an orderly fashion.

[Mr. Nowlan.]

CANADIAN CULTURE

FEDERAL ASSISTANCE TO CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State. It relates to the very real concern of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres, a group that the Secretary of State met with yesterday. Since two-thirds of the members of this group have had to cut back productions, and more than half have had to lay off staff because of the freeze over the last two or three years—a situation they describe as intolerable—what did the minister propose to them, in view of the present situation and the disastrous impact of the policies of his department? In light of the fact that the December 16 letter from the president has not yet been answered, what action is the minister prepared to take to deal with this difficult situation?

Hon. John Roberts (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, I met with them, not once but three times yesterday. The letter to which the hon. member refers has been answered. I answered it last night; I gave it to the president of the association. I am, of course, extremely concerned about the impact of restraints on funding of theatres. There has not been a freeze, as the hon. member has suggested. There has been an increase in funding to the Canada Council through which the operation of theatres is funded. This increase is equivalent to the level of increase which has generally taken place in government departments.

Nevertheless, since theatres are peculiarly subject to the impact of inflation, there has been restraint in real terms. I hope that representations such as the one the hon. member has made will make governments at all levels more sensitive to the need of funding for these people.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, in spite of the minister's sanguine reply, this situation is being described as intolerable. Some 100,000 people intend to send a series of petitions to the minister to relieve the situation. The only announcement the minister has made was last fall with regard to the \$13.6 million. That amount is being heavily questioned by members of this group and others as being used for purposes other than the legitimate development of Canadian culture. Did the minister alleviate fears in that regard? Can he indicate how this new money that was given, in light of previous budget constraints, is going to help this very serious situation?

Mr. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, I should make it clear because there seems to be some confusion on the other side of the House. Our increased funding was not a diversion, as one of the hon. member's colleagues suggested earlier, from the regular funding which has in the past been received. It was, as the hon. member correctly stated, new funding, a great deal of it to the Canada Council, the Film Board and other cultural agencies which will receive assistance, albeit indirectly—

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Not this group.