

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

VISAS FOR PARLIAMENTARY VISITORS TO CANADA

Mr. Ralph Stewart (Cochrane): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Employment and Immigration, or for the Secretary of State for External Affairs, if there is a division of responsibility.

I should like the minister to tell us what the policy is, or if there is a change in the policy regarding visitors' visas for members of parliament and other citizens from NATO countries who are visiting Canada. I ask this question because at the time of a NATO subcommittee meeting in Canada recently, the Greek delegate had difficulty coming into the country. Much to the embarrassment of members of parliament here, he pointed out that one of his colleagues was refused an entry visa for Canada and that Canada is the only NATO country where a visa is required for Greek citizens.

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, this is the first I have heard of this matter. So that I may give a precise answer, I will take the question as notice.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

LEGISLATION RESPECTING MARRIED, WORKING WOMEN

Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. In view of the concern expressed by many women in the labour force, and particularly the reservations expressed by the commissioner of the human rights commission about the legislation before the House and the discriminatory implications of the "family income" provisions in the bill for married, working women, could the minister say whether he sought the advice of the law officers of the Crown prior to the introduction of this piece of legislation to see whether there were any aspects of the bill which were in contravention of the Canadian Human Rights Act?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport and Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, the tradition in the House and, indeed, the rule is that law officers must look at legislation from the point of view of the Canadian Bill of Rights, and I have no doubt that this procedure was followed.

I am not sure that there is a specific procedure to test it against other legislation, but I will be glad to inform myself about that and to look at the pith and substance of the question being raised. I know, from listening to the debate yesterday, that the matter was discussed here in more appropriate form.

Miss MacDonald: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. When the minister looks into this very important question—important because it is of such basic interest, such a fundamental concept to working women in our society today—will

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he undertake to table the opinion of the law officers of the Crown in this regard, so that we will not be left solely with the opinion of individual cabinet ministers but will have a legal opinion before the House as well?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, not only is it not a practice to table opinions, but it should be obvious to hon. members that when a piece of legislation is before the House it is a matter for debate and consideration of members of parliament as to what is to be in the law; that should be clear, and that is the forum in which it is to be discussed. I am somewhat surprised that these questions are put at this time, when there will be an opportunity to put them a little later.

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SOCIAL INSURANCE

EXTENDED USE OF SOCIAL INSURANCE NUMBERS

Mr. Jake Epp (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, may I put a question to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration concerning the fear that people have about the use, or misuse, of the social insurance number?

In view of the assurance the minister has given to the standing committee, that the issuance of the social insurance number would be tightened up and the use of the number would be tightened up, may I ask if it is common practice, as has been described by some people in the Unemployment Insurance Commission or in the department, to give confidential information to welfare agencies, provincial governments and, for that matter, private agencies, especially in view of the fact that the new Immigration Act requires some very detailed financial information on Canadian citizens who become sponsors of immigrant applications?

Hon. Bud Cullen (Minister of Employment and Immigration): No, Mr. Speaker, that is not a general policy.

Mr. Epp: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Charlebois, the executive secretary of the Unemployment Insurance Commission, is reported to have said:

The system works because officials recognize each others' voices. His officials won't give out information unless they are sure whom they are talking to.

In view of this, may I ask what procedure there is in the department to make sure the information is given to the legitimate organizations such as those within government? Is this the only security and the only check, namely, because the voice might sound familiar over the telephone, the department is now using, especially since the minister knows that even now that policy is under discussion within his department?

● (1152)

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in answer to a question yesterday, we are working to establish guidelines so that the invasion of or involvement in a person's individual rights will not be affected. We tightened up the legislation in so far as the issuance of unemployment insurance numbers is