

Oral Questions

improvement in their predicament. Emigration remains statistically insignificant. There were only 268 exit visas authorized by the Soviet Union in the last three months, about the same as the low figures of last year.

The Government is also concerned about reports of continued cultural and religious difficulties experienced by the Jewish community. Canada is calling upon the Soviet Union to adhere to internationally recognized and fundamental human rights, which include the freedoms of religion, cultural expression, and emigration. We will continue to press Soviet authorities to permit increased Jewish emigration.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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INDIAN AFFAIRS

PROPOSED ECONOMIC SUMMIT AND TRADE SHOW

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane-Superior): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Is the Minister able to confirm to the House that he plans to spend more than \$1 million on a native economic summit and trade show in Toronto next June, and is it the case that Argyle Productions, a firm headed by the Minister's good friend and political organizer, Mr. Bill Marshall, will receive over half a million dollars to put on this show?

Hon. David Crombie (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I think I can confirm the first part of the Hon. Member's question and certainly reject the second part of it.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane-Superior): Mr. Speaker, in confirming that expenditure, does the Minister really feel comfortable using such a large amount of money from the Indian Community Development Program, which is not very substantial to begin with, to finance a hyped-up media event, at the same time as the people of Lubicon Lake are looking to the Minister for help and have been looking to him for quite some time in their struggle for survival?

Hon. David Crombie (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed that the Hon. Member would suggest that it is somehow a hyped-up media event, particularly when the event has not yet been described. Certainly he has no knowledge whatsoever about it.

Mr. Penner: What about the program?

Mr. Crombie: No, there is no program so there is no way the Hon. Member would have any understanding of it.

Am I comfortable with using funds to create jobs for Indian people? You bet. The only thing that has been done for 15 years is to give them the sickness of more welfare dollars and no money to get them into business so that they can create jobs for themselves. That is why I am comfortable with that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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CHARTER OF RIGHTS

SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. On Friday the Subcommittee on Equality Rights tabled a unanimous report calling for sweeping changes in federal laws and policies affecting women, the disabled, gays and lesbians, visible minorities, and the elderly, among others. In view of the many statements made in the past by the Prime Minister calling for tolerance and respect for an full protection of minority rights, will the Prime Minister assure the House that the Government will take early action to implement these unanimous recommendations for real equality for all Canadians?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, in my absence I believe the Minister of Justice indicated that there would be a response from the Government at a reasonably early moment and I believe he indicated a time frame which would give us the time to analyse very carefully some of the very significant recommendations that have been made. That response will be provided as quickly as possible. My hon. friend can be assured that it is my hope that nothing in that response will be a variance with our belief that minority rights are indeed fundamental and very important in Canada.

[Translation]

SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is also directed to the Prime Minister. Does the Prime Minister agree with the recommendation of the Subcommittee on Equality Rights—echoed as well by the Canadian Human Rights Commission and endorsed by his colleague the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources—that discrimination based on sexual orientation must be barred by his Government, the federal Government?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, that would be part of the comprehensive response the Government is expected to submit to the House. I suspect the Hon. Member will not be surprised to learn that I am against any kind of discrimination whatsoever. Our imperfections notwithstanding, we are trying to build a more tolerant and equitable society in Canada and, with great difficulty, we will succeed, I am sure.