

Oral Questions

Hon. Pat Carney (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member should be aware that I held a special reception in May in order to meet with union representatives and to get acquainted with them, because this is a year of tough negotiations. I explained at that time that I did not want to undercut the collective bargaining process that we have in place at this time.

I am quite willing to meet with the representatives at a time when my participation would be helpful, but considering the lack of progress at the bargaining table I do not see what point would be served at this time.

LABOUR RELATIONS—GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister. The Minister and the Government have adopted an increasingly confrontational and non-communicational approach to labour relations with its own employees.

When will the President of the Treasury Board and Treasury Board officials get their heads out of the sand, stop stonewalling the bargaining units, and start treating the employees with a sense of decency? When can we expect some action and not just the damning, the ignoring, the downsizing and the degradation of the Public Service of Canada? When will the Minister and the Government start treating them with some respect?

Hon. Pat Carney (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I think this Government has been a good employer of the Public Service. We have brought in special measures such as the self-funded leave provision which was introduced recently. We have brought in the employment equity scheme and we have brought in a whole series of special benefits and measures that will assist the Public Service.

In view of the Hon. Member's concern, possibly he could suggest that the unions involved should come to the bargaining table and accelerate their efforts to settle on these agreements.

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TELEFILM CANADA

FORMER CHAIRMAN'S EXPENSE ACCOUNT

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, last October Peter Pearson, Executive Director of Telefilm Canada, a \$100 million Canadian cultural agency, made serious allegations about the Chairman, Mr. Jean Sirois, an appointee and friend of the Prime Minister. I quote:

No examination of the Chairman's expense account and billings could stand public scrutiny... The Chairman stridently intervened to help personal and political friends.

My question is for the Chairman of the Communications and Culture Committee of the House of Commons. On three occasions, March 1, March 15, and May 4 that committee promised hearings into these serious allegations but last night the Conservative majority overruled this commitment. Why this whitewash? Did the Chairman receive instructions from the Prime Minister's Office to bury these embarrassing allegations against a friend of the Prime Minister?

Mr. John Gormley (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, without accepting the ridiculous premise to that question, I would offer two points in response.

First, the Member should recall that on June 22 the committee held a planning meeting and decided at that point to forgo the calling of witnesses and instead issue a written report. The Member was represented at that meeting of the committee.

Second, it is a tradition in this place that committees set their agenda and decide on the calling of witnesses in committee meeting. I would suggest that this Member continue that practice.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Waddell: That is a pretty lame excuse.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, they promised an investigation, but they will do nothing. Because Sirois is a personal friend of the Prime Minister, Mr. Pearson will not have an opportunity to defend himself.

DEMAND THAT MR. PEARSON BE ALLOWED TO JUSTIFY HIS POSITION

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver—Kingsway): My supplementary question is: How can the Committee Chairman justify such an action and when will Mr. Pearson be able to tell his story to this House or a Committee of this House?

● (1200)

[*English*]

Mr. John Gormley (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Again, Mr. Speaker, without accepting the preamble to that question, I would suggest that the Hon. Member consult with those who represented him at the June 22 meeting when the committee made the decision to issue a written report on this matter and to forgo the calling of witnesses. I would suggest that the Member's actions have now jeopardized the tabling of that written report.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There will be one question from the Hon. Member for Cape Breton—The Sydneys and one question from the Hon. Member for Don Valley East.