

Oral Questions

[English]

Mr. Andras: Mr. Speaker, the current criteria have not essentially changed from those that applied last year. It is my understanding that they were released during the period when the House was not in session. I think that information was sent to all members but I will certainly look into the matter and make sure, if that was not the case, that it is done forthwith.

LOCAL INITIATIVES PROGRAM—ALLEGED REFUSAL OF REGIONAL MANPOWER OFFICES TO GIVE INFORMATION TO MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT ABOUT APPLICATIONS

Mr. John Lundrigan (Gander-Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the new Minister of Manpower and Immigration. Can he say whether any orders or instructions were issued to the local regional manpower offices that they were not to divulge any information to Members of Parliament on LIP applications?

Hon. Robert Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): On the contrary, Mr. Speaker, I have asked the manpower offices to co-operate to the fullest with Members of Parliament from all parties. There has been no directive to the contrary.

• (1430)

Mr. Lundrigan: Would the minister inquire why officers at the top levels in the regional offices are advising Members of Parliament that they are not permitted to discuss LIP applications with M.P.s and that if they are found doing so they will be severely reprimanded?

Mr. Andras: I will certainly investigate that matter because there is no intention on the part of the minister's office or of senior people in the department, as far as I am aware, to convey such an instruction.

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INDIAN AFFAIRS

GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATION AT INJUNCTION PROCEEDINGS UNDERTAKEN BY INDIANS AGAINST JAMES BAY HYDROELECTRIC POWER PROJECT

Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and The Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Justice. Can the minister inform the House whether the government is represented at the interlocutory injunction hearing in connection with the James Bay hydro project and, if so, by whom?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice): We were initially represented as a party named in the initial proceedings, but we have not been formally represented since the situation changed and we are no longer a party to the proceedings.

Miss MacDonald (Kingston and The Islands): Does the government intend to arrange for a senior official, a person at deputy minister level, to continuously attend the hearings, and will that person be presenting a brief at the hearings outlining the position of the government?

Mr. Lang: I shall need to check to determine the extent to which officials of the department at a fairly senior level who have been involved in the case have in fact been following the proceedings from day to day. I have not received a report recently but I shall be glad to get the information for the hon. member.

Miss MacDonald (Kingston and The Islands): In light of the government's constitutional responsibility toward the rights of Indians and Inuits, has the government formulated a position with respect to the issue before the hearing and, if so, will that position be outlined to the House or to the hearing immediately?

Mr. Lang: The Department of Justice is, of course, in the position of advising other departments of government with regard to the legal aspect of the government's responsibilities and we are in constant touch with the departments concerned in that regard, but it is not the custom of the department to inform other persons of the advice we are giving.

INQUIRY AS TO STATEMENT ON GOVERNMENT POSITION RESPECTING ABORIGINAL RIGHTS—REFERENCE TO COMMITTEE

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): May I address a related question, Mr. Speaker, to one of the unchangeables in the cabinet, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Howard: If the applauders had known what I meant by "unchangeable" they would not have applauded. Inasmuch as the fundamental question involved in the James Bay affair is that of aboriginal rights, is the minister in a position to make any announcement which differs from that made in the past, namely, a declaration that the government will respect the aboriginal rights of these people not only in the James Bay area but elsewhere in Canada?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I might be given the opportunity at this time to answer a question asked earlier by the hon. member for Kingston and The Islands (Miss MacDonald). Regarding the cases that are before the court, we are not present there because, according to the new government policy, we do not want to substitute ourselves to the Indians who are quite able to defend their rights. As it has been realized, we have made available to the Indians and Inuits all the documents needed and some officials of my department have even gone to court yesterday as witnesses.

[English]

Mr. Howard: I should like to address a supplementary question to the Prime Minister with respect to the response just made by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development who has obviously denied and abnegated the constitutional responsibility of the federal government—