

Oral Questions

EMERGENCY FUNDING REQUESTED

Miss Pauline Jewett (New Westminster-Coquitlam): Madam Speaker, the Minister, when he was Minister of National Health and Welfare is the one who changed the funding formula to block funding and put the Government into the position it is in today. Will the Minister, therefore, since this Government does have some responsibility for the replacement of the pre-1977 formula, in taking this degree of responsibility, pursue immediately with the Provinces an emergency agreement? I am not speaking now of the next step in funding, but of an emergency fund. Otherwise, as I said, the principle of accessibility, which I thought the Government believed in, is going to be almost totally eroded.

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the concept of block funding in 1976 was introduced under the pressure and representations of the Provinces. They all insisted that the system be changed, and even today—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lalonde: Well, the New Democratic Party seem to be making noise about this now, and they would be the ones objecting about confrontation with the Provinces. We are trying to co-operate with them and this is what we have done. This is what we are still trying to do. At the present time the fact is that the Provinces will not agree to go back to a 50-50 cost-sharing arrangement. They want to have the so-called flexibility which they are talking about, to allocate the funds as they wish.

As far as an emergency fund is concerned, Madam Speaker, I remind the hon. lady that in the last year we have allocated for the purpose of job training of young people, in particular, the largest amounts we have ever allocated in this country. This is money which has been allocated and is being spent now. We have not waited for the urging of the NDP in that regard. We have acted, and we will continue to act.

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OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR MANITOBA AMENDMENT

Mr. Robert Bockstael (St. Boniface): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Right Hon. Prime Minister. The Government of Manitoba is proposing to amend Section 23 of the Manitoba Act of 1870, which will partly reinstate the status of the other official language in Manitoba and so provide certain provincial government services in the French language. Given the controversy surrounding this proposal, and the extremism and hostility which have characterized much of the reaction exhibited by the Official Opposition in Manitoba in the past few weeks, does the federal Government intend to reinforce its support for the amendment as introduced by the provincial Attorney General and concurred in by the Secretary of State? And if so, in what manner?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member raises a very difficult and important question, one to which I have been giving some thought. I am prepared to share these thoughts with the House.

It seems to me that the record of this Parliament as regards the recognition and entrenchment of both official languages is very good. Every party in this House has been supportive of the Official Languages Act, and I believe that when the Government of Manitoba, along with the Government of Canada and Société Francophone des Manitobains, reached an agreement for an entrenchment into the Constitution of the two official languages, there was a great satisfaction on all sides of this House at the progress shown. I would want to find some way, hopefully a multi-party agreement, of influencing the Government and Legislature of Manitoba to continue with the very progressive steps which had been taken some months ago.

I am at a loss as of now as to what the best approach would be. I am thinking of perhaps proposing a resolution which could be sponsored jointly by the Leader of the Official Opposition and myself, or by the Leader of the New Democratic Party, in which this House would enjoin the Legislature of Manitoba to rethink the opposition which is mounting against this very progressive and, I must say, very, Canadian legislation. However, I have not yet raised it with the Leader of the Opposition. I probably will seek an appointment with him within a few days to see if there can be some progress in this regard.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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[Translation]

DATE AND SUBJECT OF MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Brian Mulroney (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Right Hon. Prime Minister. I would just like to say that whenever he would like to have an appointment with me, my door will be wide open, especially, of course—

An Hon. Member: Get to the point!

Mr. Mulroney: Madam Speaker, I can assure the Hon. Minister of National Health and Welfare that I will get there in due time.

In view of the answer given by the Right Hon. Prime Minister, my question is as follows: Does he intend to meet within the next few days with the Leader of the New Democratic Party and myself, because in that case, I would be delighted to prepare immediately for a meeting on a subject he would like to see handled with generosity and respect. The question therefore is, when the Prime Minister would like to