

*Oral Questions***ABORIGINAL RIGHTS**

GOVERNMENT POLICY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE

These programs cost \$3,500 per inmate per year. That is a high amount. My hope is that post-secondary education can still be brought to them by self-help, by group sessions and by correspondence courses. I believe that, if those inmates really want to have the benefit of post-secondary education, they can develop it in some way that will cost the taxpayers less money.

Mr. Robinson (Burnaby): Well, Madam Speaker, this is just an exercise in colossal correctional stupidity. It is going to reinforce the "warehousing" concept that this Government seems to support and which is an expensive failure in the present prison system.

REQUEST THAT DECISION BE DEFERRED

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): My supplementary is directed to the Solicitor General. The Warden of William Head Institution in British Columbia, as well as a number of other wardens across the country, has said that if the Minister persists in axing this successful program there are going to be very serious consequences within the federal prison community. In view of the widespread support for the program, will the Solicitor General at the very least agree to defer a final decision on the matter until he has met with university and prison officials who are directly affected by this fundamentally mistaken decision?

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General of Canada): No, Madam Speaker, my decision is a final one, but I make it believing that the slightly over 200 inmates who have been benefiting from these programs can find other ways within our system of getting a higher education. It is totally wrong to characterize the Correctional Service of Canada as a "warehousing" system, and the Hon. Member knows that. It is the best in North America, and he knows that also.

PROVISION OF FREE UNIVERSITY TUITION TO INMATES

Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): Madam Speaker, perhaps the Minister would explain to the House why inmates of the correctional service, who are being paid for by the taxpayers of Canada, should receive free university tuition when the children of those taxpayers do not?

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General of Canada): Madam Speaker, I believe we do have a responsibility to rehabilitate offenders who are behind bars, and we will continue to exercise that responsibility, but when programs across the country are being cut back for people who are not in prison, I think inmates, and others who support inmates, have to understand that restraint has also to be applied within the Correctional Service as well.

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs. Last week the press published a leaked Government document written by a certain Denis Morantz of the Federal-Provincial Relations Office outlining a possible government policy for the Constitutional Conference on Aboriginal Rights scheduled for March 15 and March 16. Since the document suggested a policy and tactics which are manipulative, cynical and insincere, will the Minister say whether that document represents the policy of his Department and, if not would he assure this House that he will take an open and co-operative approach in planning for that conference?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Madam Speaker, I, for one, have not seen this alleged leaked document, but from what my hon. friend says it is some type of memo from one official to another and, as the Hon. Member knows, having been a Minister in the Government previously, officials' memos do not form government policy. The Cabinet certainly is not contemplating any approach which would be cynical or have any of the other attributes which the Hon. Member identifies; rather, we are approaching that conference with the best of intentions to do the very best we can for the native people of Canada.

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AGRICULTURE

EFFECT OF PROPOSED SPOUSAL TAX EXEMPTION—MINISTER'S POSITION

Hon. Bill Jarvis (Perth): Madam Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of Agriculture who, I am sure, in common with all Hon. Members of this House, will have received various forms of communication arising from the statement made by the minister responsible for the status of women regarding spousal exemptions under the Income Tax Act. The Minister will know that many farm wives have not had the option to enter the work force because, to preserve and enhance the integrity of the family farm, they, of necessity, have had to stay on the farm, where they are, in my view, true partners and true contributors to the preservation of the family farm. I wonder, because of the Minister's responsibility for the family farm and its operators, would he indicate to us what his position is with regard to any changes to the spousal exemption under the Income Tax Act.

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I have received no letters from any farm organization or any farmers' wives, to my knowledge. Once we have received representations I will have discussions with the Minister concerned, dealing also with our concern about joint ownership, joint partnership in farming. We know, and the