

Oral Questions

Mr. Cosgrove: Madam Speaker, if the hon. gentleman is proposing that in response to this immediate need the community services program is an answer, then I have to remind him that that program will continue with funding from the federal government until the month of March, 1982. Funding is continuing under that program until March, 1982, so to talk about that program in response to what we perceive to be a significant demand change in the province is not the answer. I will only repeat my previous answers. We think other programs are the answer.

Mr. Wenman: Like what?

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INDIAN AFFAIRS**PROVISION OF FUNDS FOR NEW BRUNSWICK WOMEN'S CONFERENCE**

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development or, in his absence, his parliamentary secretary. The parliamentary secretary knows that since October status and non-status Indian women in New Brunswick have been planning a conference in Fredericton for February 21.

In addition to funds from the Department of the Secretary of State, the status Indian women requested money from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development for the specific purpose of helping status women to take part in the planning process. In a letter dated January 20 the parliamentary secretary wrote that these funds would be made available. Yesterday, the Indian women were told that this extra money would not be forthcoming. Could the parliamentary secretary or the minister tell the House why this money will not be made available after a commitment has been made?

● (1440)

[Translation]

Mr. Ray Chénier (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Madam Speaker, contrary to what the hon. member stated in his question, the money has been turned over to the Native Women's Committee of New Brunswick. They are now having a few additional financial problems which we are also trying to solve, so that they will have the money they need for next week's conference.

[English]

Mr. Manly: The minister and the parliamentary secretary know that the most positive way to end discrimination against Indian women is to help these women form their own strong political organizations. I ask the minister, therefore, to confirm that the extra money which was promised for the planning process for status women will be made available.

Mr. Chénier: Madam Speaker, the money will be forthcoming. We agree with the hon. member opposite that we must help these women acquire a strong status in this country, and that is why we are working at present to obtain this extra money. Their conference will be taking place and we will be there with them.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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[Translation]

THE CONSTITUTION**POSSIBILITY OF LIMITING INDIVIDUAL SPEECHES AND OF ADDITIONAL DEBATING TIME**

Mr. Gilles Marceau (Jonquière): Madam Speaker, my question is for the President of the Privy Council. The constitutional debate is a landmark in our parliamentary life, and I believe that as many Members of Parliament as possible should be able to contribute to this debate if they wish to do so. Consequently, has the government leader considered as a possible solution shortening the length of speeches and lengthening our sitting hours, and would he be willing to suggest such a solution to the opposition?

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, I believe that this is an excellent suggestion. We have now come to the final stage of the constitutional debate, and many members have been able to take part in the discussions during the last four months. I believe that if the length of speeches were limited to 20 minutes and if we were to add about ten hours of sitting each week, this would serve the double purpose of improving the quality of the debate and of allowing in all fairness a greater number of members to take part in the discussions. This suggestion is so attractive, Madam Speaker, that I shall put it officially to the opposition. This would be a good opportunity for hon. members opposite to show their good will.

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[English]

SMALL BUSINESS**GOVERNMENT ACTION TO PROTECT SMALL BUSINESS**

Mr. Otto Jelinek (Halton): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Small Business. Yesterday in the House the Grits refused to support my motion calling for tougher legislation respecting mergers which are harmful to independent small businesses. I was pleased to hear, however, that the Quebec Superior Court saw fit to acknowledge this urgent situation by granting an injunction which will at least block the Hudson's Bay-Zeller's merger. I should like to ask the minister the following question. Because of the increased tendency toward monopoly mergers and the inability of existing laws to deal adequately with the consequences of such