

Oral Questions

Mr. Valcourt: But seriously, Mr. Speaker, the seal population issue—

[*English*]

It is, indeed, a serious situation there, and I intend to intensify the research program initiated in 1988, in co-operation with the industry and the universities, to ensure that we can get rid of what people say is a *fléau* there, but we need much more scientific evidence and we are going to try to get it.

In the meantime, my parliamentary secretary has been very active on the seal question for a long time, and I would hope, within the next few days, to be able to give an answer, one way or the other.

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[*Translation*]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. The Canadian Human Rights Commission's annual report tabled yesterday criticizes very strongly the Conservative government's indifference in this regard, which has contributed to a dangerous rise in racism, sexism and homophobia and to the marginalization of natives and the disabled.

My question is this: given the Commission's statement that further delay in proposed amendments to the legislation will surely bring into question the federal commitment to human rights principles, will the Minister assure this House that she will table these basic amendments this spring, as her predecessor had promised? When will she move toward equality?

[*English*]

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I am not able to promise the hon. member that I will table those amendments this spring.

I will repeat what I said the previous time he asked this question, that the Canadian Human Rights Act is under comprehensive review in the Department of Justice, which has an enormous workload at the moment, and we are attempting to bring forward a number of pieces of legislation for consideration in this House.

I think it is important that the hon. member remember that it was this government that instituted the process that came forward with the report called *Toward Equality*, and we are proceeding to act on those recommendations. I believe that the House will be pleased with the recommendations that we bring forward for the amendment of the Canadian Human Rights Act.

Mr. Robert E. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question for the Minister of Justice.

For the second straight year, the Human Rights Commission chairman has described the status of aboriginal people as a national tragedy. He criticizes the cuts to post-secondary education, native media, and representative organizations as harsh and inappropriate. He says that, if there is any single issue on which Canada cannot hold its head high in the international community, it is in the area of aboriginal relations.

My question for the Minister of Justice and the former Associate Minister of Indian Affairs is this: This year, will she take the commissioner's recommendations seriously? Will she act on his recommendation for a royal commission? In the absence of any useful action on the budget cuts that came from the Secretary of State, will she act to reverse those funding cuts which have been characterized as a setback to equality and human rights for natives?

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague, the Minister for Indian Affairs and Northern Development, would also like to address this question.

But I would like, first of all, to correct a statement made by the hon. member that there were cuts in funding for post-secondary education. That is absolutely false. The post-secondary education budget was increased—

Some hon. members: Come on.

Ms. Campbell (Vancouver Centre): If it is in the report, then it is an error and I am sure my colleague will want to address himself to that.

The issues raised by the Human Rights Commission are, of course, serious and, as I have mentioned in this House before in response to questions on the Donald Marshall inquiry, for example, that there are a number of departments in the government that are addressing