

Oral Questions

[Translation]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

SALARIES OF JOURNALISTS ON FRENCH AND ENGLISH NETWORKS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, I have a question about yesterday's walk-out by reporters at the CBC French network, which deprived Canadians of their usual news program and public affairs programs such as *Le Point*.

As you know, one of the most controversial items in negotiations between the CBC and its reporters is the unacceptable gap between the salaries of reporters working for the French network and the salaries of reporters who work for the CBC's English network. This in a country where we support the policy of equal pay for equal work.

I want to ask the Government why it tolerates this discriminatory treatment of reporters working for the French network. What does the Government intend to do to help reporters of the French network get fair and equal treatment?

[English]

Hon. David Crombie (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I can answer on behalf of the Minister of Communications who is in Quebec City at the summit on government business, of course. She will be there for a day or two and will then return to the House. I will bring the Hon. Member's question to her attention when she returns. At that time he may want to ask her the question directly.

[Translation]

EQUALITY BETWEEN WORKERS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, this is a fundamental issue and it is about equal pay for equal work.

Since the Minister is prepared to send a message to the Minister of Communications, could I ask him to send another one?

As you know, another very controversial item is that the CBC refuses to treat one-third of its reporters, and I am referring to those who work on contract, on the same footing, especially with respect to termination of employment, as its regular staff. These reporters are full members of the CBC reporters' union, accredited by the Canada Labour Relations Board, which was confirmed by the Courts and in fact by the Supreme Court.

How can the Government let the CBC break this country's laws and ignore decisions made by the Supreme Court? Could the Minister pass this message on to the Minister of Communications?

● (1440)

[English]

Hon. David Crombie (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, of course, it is an important question. Of course, it is a fundamental question. That is why I think the Hon. Member should get his answer from the Minister responsible, who will be returning to the House, rather than trying to make some politics out of it.

* * *

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

DEPARTMENT'S EXPENDITURES

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister who, as a westerner, will be well aware that the prosperity experienced in parts of central Canada is not a prosperity that most Canadians have experienced. In recognition of the fact that 75 per cent of the budget of DRIE is expended in central Canada, would the Minister explain to the men and women of western Canada, as well as eastern and northern Canada, why his Government perpetuates this imbalance in terms of DRIE spending, focusing where it is needed the least as opposed to where it is needed the most?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and President of the Treasury Board): I am not sure, Mr. Speaker, whether the Hon. Member is aware of the \$1.2 billion Western Diversification Program that was announced in western Canada. Perhaps I will send him over a copy of the announcement which I think is a clear indication of this Government's commitment to the diversification and the broadening of the western economic base. If the Hon. Member dropped into Alberta once in a while—

Mr. Broadbent: We are.

Mr. Mazankowski:—he would find that drilling activity is increasing very much. The grants under the Canadian Exploration Development Incentives Program are flowing to the oil companies. There is a Special Grains Program of \$1 billion which has been provided plus relief on transportation, relief on fuel taxes. The Minister responsible for agriculture and grains and oilseeds has been meeting with the farmers to work out another program—

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member.

Some Hon. Members: More, more!

Mr. Riis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I can remind the Minister that my question was about DRIE funds, 75 per cent of DRIE funding going to central Canada.