

officials have been in touch with him; I believe they wrote to him the day before yesterday. I am awaiting any specific information which would help me to track down such cases, if indeed there are any. I can assure the hon. member there has never been any instruction, implied or otherwise, on my part that grants or awards should be given on the basis he suggested.

• (1142)

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): In view of the fact that the minister indicated at the meeting early in December that he would supply to members of the committee a clear indication of the nature of the projects that have been funded, and a further elaboration on the criteria—something that has not yet been received by the committee members—and because during the month of December, when the minister announced his policy for aid to Francophones, there was a noticeable lack of either prior consultation or, in effect, acceptance by the umbrella organization, the Federation of Francophones of Quebec, could the minister indicate if his department is still bypassing this organization in the allocation of grants, and whether any steps are being taken to effect meaningful, ongoing consultation and co-ordination in this important program?

Mr. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, I think three questions are contained in the hon. member's question. I will try to answer each one of them. Of course, decisions about grants are made within the framework of the government; they are not made by the organizations which consult with the government. Second, there has been a continuing effort to seek consultation in this area, particularly over the summer months when we were preparing the proposals which I announced before Christmas. There has been a constant effort to obtain the co-operation of La Fédération Francophone hors Québec in the elaboration of these programs, and for reasons which they have expressed, with which I am unhappy, they decided not to take part in the process of consultation.

Third, I should indicate that in terms of the elaboration of the criteria to which the hon. member referred, criteria have been established for a considerable period of time for the official languages minority group program. What I have suggested is that it might be useful to develop those criteria further, to elaborate on them and to find additional criteria for the funding of groups. So there are criteria already available. It has been my hope that through the process of consultation we might be able to improve on those criteria to further assist the groups.

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COMMUNICATIONS

LONGLAC, ONT.—REPORTED SEIZURE OF TRANSMITTING EQUIPMENT

Mr. B. Keith Penner (Thunder Bay): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of Communications. I ask the minister whether she is aware of the fact that last night, in

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Longlac, Ontario, officials of her department, aided by the RCMP, seized the transmitting equipment of the Northern Access network. This was done on the eve of French language television being put on the air for the first time in Longlac, something which the CBC has promised for many years but never delivered. Will the minister instruct her officials to stop this practice of harassment against these citizens living in an isolated region of Canada, and can she tell the House what action is proposed to help Northern Access to become technically certified and then licensed?

Hon. Jeanne Sauvé (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of these actions which took place last night, but I expect the only grounds on which such seizure of equipment could take place would be that the equipment of the persons or firm in question was not up to the standard required by the department. However, I will inquire immediately into this situation to see what really happened and for what reasons.

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LABOUR RELATIONS

RAILWAYS—BREAKDOWN OF NEGOTIATIONS IN LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address a question to the Minister of Labour. In view of the fact that negotiations between the railway brotherhoods and railway management broke down yesterday after a period of negotiation, and in view of the fact that the unions have asked the minister to appoint a commissioner in this matter, can he tell the House whether he will do so, what the duties of Mr. Kelly are, and what his status is in his movement from here to Montreal? Also, can the minister tell the House whether he has held discussions with the railroads and the unions on this matter?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member is aware, Mr. Kelly is highly experienced, especially in railway negotiations, so no doubt he has been in discussion with both management and labour. On the railways, his function is, of course, to go to Montreal to try to achieve a settlement by bringing the parties together. I sincerely hope he can accomplish it.

Mr. Benjamin: In view of the fact that the issues which caused the breakdown in the negotiations are confined to the totally inadequate response of the companies on fringe benefits, nothing for those who are on pension and, what is most serious, the whole matter of the railways' attempt to contract out—which has to do with job security—will the minister be making representations through other ministers or the government as a whole to the railway management? Also, since I appreciate that he must maintain some element of neutrality and impartiality, will he ask the Minister of Transport, rather than my chicken-plucking friend from St. John's West, to call upon the Canadian National Railways and Canadian Pacific