

Oral Questions

[English]

INDIAN AFFAIRS

REPORTED DELAY IN PAYMENT TO CREE OF QUEBEC

Mr. John Parry (Kenora—Rainy River): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the President of the Treasury Board. The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, in a letter to the Cree of Quebec, stated last week that it could not make the final payment due under the Cree-Neskapi Act giving as justification the fact that Supplementary Estimates have not been passed and that another agreement had used up existing funds.

Is it satisfactory to the President of the Treasury Board that signed legal agreements of the Government of Canada are allowed to be dependent upon the passing of Supplementary Estimates?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Hon. Member for having sent me notice of the substance of his question a few minutes ago. I would be very happy to look into the allegations and discuss them with my colleague, the Minister responsible, and I will endeavour to have an answer for the Member in the very near future.

GOVERNMENT'S OBLIGATIONS

Mr. John Parry (Kenora—Rainy River): Mr. Speaker, is the President of the Treasury Board considering the institution of a unit which will ensure that all signed legal agreements of the Government of Canada are paid when due, in full and on time?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I think it is very well known that this Government, the only Government for which I can speak, has always respected its engagements and will continue to do so.

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[Translation]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

REDUCTION OF FRANCOPHONE EMPLOYEES

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I want to get back to the matter of the RCMP and direct my question to the Solicitor General, the responsible Minister.

In a publication called *Pony Express*, it was made very clear that the RCMP has adopted a policy of reducing the number of Francophones within the corps.

Was the Government consulted? Did it give instructions to the RCMP about this policy to reduce the percentage of Francophones from 20 to 14 per cent?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, there were some discussions between officials of the RCMP and officials of Treasury Board. The circular to which the Hon. Member referred appeared following these discussions, discussions that never received the approval of the Treasury Board or Cabinet. It is to be regretted that the directive was issued, but it is certainly not Government policy.

POLICY RELATING TO OFFICIAL LANGUAGES—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I can therefore assume that the Government rejects the document and that the present 20 per cent will be maintained.

Could I ask the Solicitor General who can use his executive powers to inform the RCMP that we have no inclination of starting discussions of this kind at a time when a review of the official languages policy is imminent?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, as the Minister responsible for the application of the Official Languages Act in the Public Service, I can inform the Hon. Member that we review the proposals from each department, which must be submitted to Treasury Board and approved by Treasury Board before being approved as Government policy. And that is exactly what is going to be done in this case. The same procedure will be followed.

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[English]

AGRICULTURE

USE OF ARABLE LAND IN SASKATCHEWAN

Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. Friday last the NDP asked if the Government was giving up on prairie grain farming through a LIFT type program. In the meantime the NDP leader in Saskatchewan was quoted as saying, "If we were far-sighted and able to do it, we would be taking land out of production".

Would the Deputy Prime Minister leave the land in production as requested by the Member for Yorkton—Melville, or would he take it out of production as requested by Mr. Blakeney?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for being very observant. That is a very incisive question. It is certainly the New Democratic Party in Saskatchewan, and Mr. Blakeney in particular, that has talked about taking land out of production, land banks, and government ownership of land. We in this Party choose to support the production efforts of farmers and that is what we are in the process of doing.