

*Oral Questions***THE CANADA COUNCIL**

TELEPHONE CALL MADE BY DEPUTY MINISTER

Mr. John Bosley (Don Valley West): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Communications and is supplementary to the questions asked by the Hon. Member for Rosedale. The Minister knows that Mr. Porteous of the Canada Council testified in committee that he received a telephone call from the Minister's Deputy Minister. The Minister also knows that last week in the House the Acting Prime Minister said that the phone call was made at the request of the Minister of Communications and with the consent of the Minister of Communications.

Does the Minister want the House to understand that the phone call was made, that it was made with his consent, and that he gave instructions with regard to that phone call? Further, since the Minister says that he did not give the instructions to which the Hon. Member for Rosedale referred, would he therefore tell us precisely what instructions he did give his Deputy Minister?

Hon. Francis Fox (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, a number of phone calls are made on a daily basis between officials of my Department and the Canada Council. I think it is quite obvious that there must be a working relationship between them. A number of issues, including ongoing issues, are indeed discussed during the course of these conversations.

After having reviewed the matter with my Deputy Minister, he informs me that there were indeed no instructions given to the Director of the Canada Council along the lines suggested by the Hon. Member. These may have been interpreted as instructions, and this is probably what Mr. Porteous is suggesting. But I have informed the House that there were indeed no instructions of that kind, and that perhaps the conversation was misunderstood.

● (1450)

To make it even clearer than that, I am referring to two earlier statements on the part of two Ministers of the Crown indicating that the Canada Council was welcome to appear before that committee. As a matter of fact, I personally told Mr. Porteous that the Canada Council ought to appear in front of that committee if it felt there were points which ought to be discussed and clarified.

REQUEST THAT DEPUTY MINISTER APPEAR AS COMMITTEE WITNESS

Mr. John Bosley (Don Valley West): Mr. Speaker, the Minister will particularly know how important the credibility of the Canada Council is in the arts community. Since the Minister seems to be implying that either Mr. Porteous misunderstood the conversation or has misrepresented it, will the Minister instruct his Deputy Minister to appear before the Standing Committee as a witness, now that the Canada Council has appeared before it, so that the Standing Committee

may ask his Deputy Minister, as it asked the Canada Council, direct questions with regard to this matter, in order that the committee may determine whether in fact the Minister is hanging his Deputy Minister out to dry to protect himself?

Hon. Francis Fox (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I am indeed indicating on behalf of my Deputy Minister, as the Minister does—the Minister responds to questions in this House on behalf of his officials—that my Deputy Minister did not give any instructions to the Canada Council along the lines suggested by the Hon. Member. I am indicating that if the executive Director of the Council thought these to be instructions, he did not understand the conversation properly.

There were no instructions given to the Canada Council telling it not to appear in front of that committee. If you will allow me to repeat myself once more this afternoon—I said it four times, perhaps five times—I will say it a sixth time. I personally invited the Canada Council to appear in front of the committee. My colleague, Mr. Austin, did the same thing. The proof, once again, is in the pudding. The Council appeared. It appeared with members of the Council, members appointed by this Government, and it made its point of view known very clearly indeed.

As I indicated to the Hon. Member for Rosedale previously, we believe that perhaps as a result of this interaction by the Council and the committee, some good ideas may be generated on the other side of the House. If there are none generated on that side of the House, I am fully confident they will be generated on this side of the House and that this question will indeed be resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned.

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INDUSTRIAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

FORMULA GOVERNING DESIGNATION OF VICTORIA, B.C.

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion. On Friday the Minister claimed that no formula could be more fair or equitable than the present formula used to determine the tier designations for benefits under the Industrial and Regional Development Program.

Does the Minister know that for the last six months the unemployment rate in Victoria, British Columbia, has averaged more than 3 per cent above the national average? What does the Minister think is fair or equitable about a formula which designates Victoria for the lowest level of benefits, when its unemployment rate has fluctuated between 13.5 per cent and 17.6 per cent, which in February was the second highest unemployment rate for any city in Canada? What is fair or equitable about a formula which leaves Victoria at the lowest level of benefits?

Hon. Ed Lumley (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion): Mr. Speaker, a full answer would be so long that I