

Oral Questions

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Beatty: Madam Speaker, it is Liberal propaganda financed by Canadian taxpayers' dollars that we are talking about.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Beatty: Madam Speaker, the minister knows, and it is reported that Albertans may receive a highly political message from Ottawa in a brochure arguing Ottawa's energy case.

In view of the lack of concern by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, I would like to put my supplementary question to the President of the Treasury Board, who is responsible for government spending. How does the minister justify the expenditure of \$3.25 million worth of taxpayers' money on Liberal propaganda at a time when the government is telling Canadian pensioners that it does not have the money which is necessary to insulate them from higher prices?

[Translation]

Mr. Lalonde: Madam Speaker, once again I will reply in French. I have already said that the department advertising program has to do with the over-all objective of the government to conserve energy and achieve self-sufficiency in energy. The budget has been brought down and the estimates were tabled in the House to earmark huge amounts for ensuring that Canadians will have an opportunity to benefit from programs and grants which will make it possible for them to achieve those objectives of self-sufficiency and conservation.

Our advertising campaign will be aimed at making Canadians aware of those programs so they will be able to benefit from them. My colleague and friend is referring to a newspaper article, so I would urge him to check the facts instead. As for the possibility of a brochure being addressed to Alberta residents, it is clearly stated in that article that it is a suggestion which I am now studying. I would remind him that the Alberta government has sent to all residents of the province a brochure in which the federal policy is very harshly criticized. I have no hesitation whatsoever in arguing that indeed the government has every right to react to that kind of brochure should it so decide. However, I must also remind the hon. member that no such decision has yet been taken.

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[English]

LABOUR RELATIONS

B.C. TELEPHONE COMPANY DISPUTE—SIGNING OF RETURN TO WORK AGREEMENT

Mr. Mark Rose (Mission-Port Moody): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Labour, or whomever is responding for him. It concerns the length of the deplorable British Columbia Telephone Company dispute. There has been a proposal by labour arbitrators in British Columbia that a return to work agreement be signed between the company and

the union and that all outstanding issues, including the suspension of 24 employees, be settled through the efforts of a sole arbitrator, following the return to work of all employees, including the 24 who have been suspended. Last Monday there were 14 summonses issued by the attorney general's office of British Columbia. Although there have been no charges laid, to my knowledge, the disposition of any charges resulting from these summonses could delay the return to work for months. The sole arbitrator proposal has been accepted by the union. Can the Minister of Labour tell us whether he supports this idea of the sole arbitrator proposal, and would he back it?

Mr. Louis R. Desmarais (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the labour dispute in British Columbia has been complicated by the inclusion of a clause which said that the whole agreement was subject to CRTC approval of a rate increase. That has now been dropped and federal meetings are under way in B.C. to settle the only outstanding issue in this dispute, which is the return to work agreement. The meetings began the day before yesterday. We are hopeful that an agreement will result very soon.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

CALL FOR ROLLBACK OF RATE INCREASE

Mr. Mark Rose (Mission-Port Moody): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Prime Minister, if I could have his attention. The people of British Columbia are fed up with this dispute. They feel that it has gone on long enough. Unconscionable profits are being made because the phone bills continue while the wage package shrinks. There is no service; the service in British Columbia is deplorable. Will the Prime Minister consider positively a proposal to cabinet that the February CRTC rate increase be rolled back and that a rebate be given to the ill-served, ill-considered consumers or, better still, that B.C. Tel, like the telephone companies of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, be brought under public ownership?

• (1440)

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I would be happy to take notice of the question on behalf of the minister.

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[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICE

ALLEGED DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CERTAIN OFFICIALS IN QUEBEC

Mr. Gilles Marceau (Jonquière): Madam Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board. A few months ago, the clerical workers in the federal public service clamoured for the decent salaries and improved working condi-