

Oral Questions

agreement must be ratified by both parties. Therefore I am not in a position at this time to reveal the details of the settlement.

BONN ECONOMIC SUMMIT DISCUSSIONS

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that it is very clear that in fact the Government has sold out these beef producers. This is just a continuation of its policy of abandoning the livestock producers and allowing a flood of subsidized EC beef into the country. Can the Minister say whether the Prime Minister, in his recent meeting with four heads of Government of the European Economic Community, raised this matter? And why was he so unsuccessful in negotiating a lifting of the countervail which the European Community is trying to impose on Canadian agricultural commodities as a result of the Canadian quota? I wonder if the Minister—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. James Kelleher (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I would advise the hon. gentleman that the Prime Minister, in his attendance at Bonn, was not there to negotiate a beef agreement. That was being left with the relevant Ministers. I can advise the House, as I already have, that a settlement has been reached. It is now required to be ratified, and the terms of that settlement will be released in due course.

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EDUCATION

BRITISH COLUMBIA—DISBANDMENT OF LOCAL BOARDS

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Justice. A week ago Monday the Government of the Province of British Columbia took the extraordinary action of disbanding the democratically elected Board of Education in Vancouver. Yesterday it went one step further and disbanded a democratically elected Board of Education at the provincial level in Cowichan, British Columbia. Could the Minister of Justice inform the House whether or not he has investigated this situation? If so, has he made any public statement on it?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, as far as my knowledge of the Canadian Constitution goes, education is a matter within the jurisdiction of the provinces. This is a matter involving the educational system in British Columbia. I, therefore, have not investigated the situation, nor do I intend to, unless there is some allegation that somehow, in some way or other, the Government of Canada should involve itself in this matter.

It is a matter for the electorate of British Columbia to decide. It is an educational matter in British Columbia. I do not propose to interfere where no interference by the Government of Canada is required, nor expected, under the Constitution.

REQUEST FOR STATEMENT

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, with respect, and with seriousness, I say to the Minister that what is involved here is not simply a matter of education. It is a matter of fundamental democratic rights. Because the issue is serious I would like to preface my supplementary question by saying that in Cowichan the Board made it clear that it was prepared to administer a program imposed by the provincial Government. What it indicated was that it refused to violate its democratic conscience and own mandate by actually voting in its legislation for that—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I appreciate that the Hon. Member thinks the matter is quite serious, but does he have a question, please?

Mr. Broadbent: My question to the Minister of Justice is this. Considering that a fundamental democratic right of conscience is involved here, would he make it clear that the action taken by the Government of British Columbia, which is to deny the democratic rights of both the board members and the community, is unacceptable both in British Columbia and anywhere else in Canada?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, this Government intends to observe the Constitution which governs Canada. We are a federal state. Our predecessors, and the hon. gentleman, might take the position that this is a unitary state and that the federal Government has the right to interfere everywhere. We do not take that position.

This is a matter having to do with the school system of British Columbia which is up to British Columbians to decide in the usual way. If they disagree with the policy, there will be an election in British Columbia in the next several years and the matter will ultimately be decided in that way. I do not feel that there is any place for interference which would only exacerbate the situation in British Columbia.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, we are a federal state with a Charter of Rights with a preamble which commits everyone to fundamental democratic rights. I say that to the Minister of Justice as well.

FEDERAL POSITION

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Considering that this House, including the Minister's own Party when it was on this side of the House, joined in joint resolutions which have as their force moral leadership, not simply constitutional divisions of power, does the Conservative Government of Canada agree, or disagree, with this denial of basic democratic rights in the Province of British Columbia?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): I am surprised, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the New Democratic Party in British Columbia