

*Oral Questions**[English]*

RURAL DIGNITY ASSOCIATION—REQUEST FOR MEETING WITH MINISTER

Mr. Ross Belsher (Fraser Valley East): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister. At the same meeting Rural Dignity reported that it has been endeavouring to have an appointment with the Minister. Could the Minister tell us whether he will meet with Rural Dignity?

[Translation]

Hon. Michel Côté (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion): Mr. Speaker, I am of course aware of the existence of this Rural Dignity committee, and I have agreed to meet with its members. According to my agenda, this should be tomorrow or within the next few days.

[English]

REQUEST THAT MINISTER UNDERTAKE NOT TO CLOSE RURAL OFFICES

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I should like to know from the Minister responsible for the Post Office whether the reason he is framing his statements about the Post Office in terms of closures, that there will be no closures without consultation, is simply to give a licence to his back-benchers to say to their constituents that there is nothing to worry about. If that is not his intention, why does he not stand in the House and say without qualification that between now and the next election there will be no closures of post offices in rural areas?

[Translation]

Hon. Michel Côté (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion): Mr. Speaker, again, I simply said the recommendations, and I repeat it again, the recommendations made by the committee in December, and in which the Hon. Member had a hand, were to ask Canada Post not to go ahead with rural post office shutdowns without some action being taken by Canada Post. It must be remembered, Mr. Speaker, that what is involved here is service changes. This may mean merging post offices, it may mean providing additional services. And it is definitely our intention that the Canadian people be consulted as well as Members of this House before action is taken. This is all clear and simple, Mr. Speaker.

REQUEST THAT MINISTER INFORM HOUSE WHERE AND WHEN POST OFFICES WILL BE CLOSED

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, if the Minister is not prepared to state that there will be no post office shutdowns, why does he not share with this House Canada Post's plans for privatization, post office mergers and post office shutdowns? Give us definite information: where will post offices be shut down, and when?

[English]

Hon. Michel Côté (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion): Mr. Speaker, I repeat again, like I said last week, there will be no change in the service before Canada Post

proceeds with proper consultation with the population and with Members of the House. That is what I said. That is what will be done for rural post offices.

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[Translation]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

SITUATION OF FRANCOPHONES—INQUIRY WHETHER SOLICITOR GENERAL HAS ACTION PLAN

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Solicitor General. I have in my hand a report signed by Assistant Commissioner J.E.L. Julien, commanding officer of "C" Division of the RCMP. The report sent to Commissioner Simmonds describes the unacceptable and indeed regrettable conditions forced by the RCMP upon its French-speaking officers. The Government has been warned on several occasions in this House as well as in committee that it was urgent to remedy the situation. The President of the Treasury Board has admitted it himself when three months ago he asked the Solicitor General to provide him with a plan of action. I should like to ask the Minister where that plan of action is and what he intends to do?

[English]

Hon. James Kelleher (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I have assured Members of the House on a number of occasions that the RCMP is to comply with the official languages policy of the Government, the same as any other Department, and that it is obligated to comply with any order of the Treasury Board in this regard. As the Hon. Member well knows, the Commissioner will be appearing before the committee tomorrow. I am sure he can address the appropriate questions to him at that time.

REDUCTION IN FRANCOPHONE MANPOWER

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I have already done that. I know the Minister to be a reasonable man. He will admit that the point is that the Government must give direction to the RCMP because it is not doing what the languages law requires. The report of assistant Commissioner Julien states that "a feeling of rejection by the Anglophone majority" is felt by Francophones and that "participation by Francophones on the force now is marginal and unfair". Will the Minister unequivocally disavow himself from the Simmonds' policy of reduction in RCMP Francophone manpower from 20 per cent to 12 per cent? Will he disavow that policy today in the House?

Hon. James Kelleher (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, a rose by any other name would smell as sweet. That is the same question he asked the first time and therefore I will give him the same answer. The RCMP will have to comply with the official languages policy of the Government and the use of Francophones within the force. Second, it will have to