

Oral Questions

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I am glad the hon. member is attaching such importance to this report. He will be a positive influence in his own party when we come to discussing the question of parliamentary reform, which is very high on the government's agenda and which would permit us to consider the implementation of some of the recommendations in the Peterson task force report.

In so far as the Economic Council recommendations are concerned, the hon. member is correct in pointing out that they refer particularly to certain departments. The Department of Transport and the Department of Agriculture are two examples. Of course the ministers responsible for these departments are already beginning to study the report and to consider ways by which action could be taken.

Mr. Crosbie: Would you report to us on it?

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MULTICULTURALISM**PROGRAM TO COMBAT RACISM**

Hon. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for Multiculturalism, who announced with much fanfare the other day a \$1.5 million program to combat racism. He made remarks about how terrible racism is, and I agree with him.

● (1140)

While the minister is announcing a \$1.5 million program to combat racism, the Minister of Employment and Immigration is cutting the funding for the Immigrant Services Society in British Columbia. Given the fact there are 1,000 immigrants a month into the lower mainland area of British Columbia, and given the fact that 43 per cent of children starting school in my area speak English as their second language, and given the fact we have a large non-white population in the lower mainland, and given the fact that without the Immigrant Services Society—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Fraser: Who is the speaker over there anyway? Given the fact that we brought—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Fraser: Madam Speaker, what they do not want to hear is obvious.

Madam Speaker: Members will hear anything during debate, but Question Period requires members to put their questions rather concisely.

Mr. Fraser: Madam Speaker, my question is this: Why is one hand of government cutting the funding so desperately needed out there, while people in the minister's department are

going around trying to make heroes out of themselves by saying they do not like racism?

An hon. Member: Same old gang.

Hon. Jim Fleming (Minister of State (Multiculturalism)): Madam Speaker, perhaps the reason I did not immediately catch the hon. member's question was because it is the first question I have had from the opposition in eight months. They certainly seem to have a great interest in multiculturalism and equity in this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Fleming: I believe there was a shot at the end of the question to the effect that we were trying to do something self-seeking in announcing the program to improve racial equity in Canada. I do not find that self-seeking; surely that is a fundamental policy supported by all sides of this House in several motions under Standing Order 43 in the last couple of months.

The question of ISAP funding should, of course, be directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration, but I might say that the statements made by the hon. member in posing his question are alarmist and untrue according to the facts I have.

REASONS FOR GOVERNMENT ACTIONS

Hon. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): I invite the minister to retract what he said. I know what goes on in my own area.

I ask the minister: why do you indulge in the hypocrisy of this kind of announcement when you cut the funding that we so desperately need in an area where we will have problems if you do not support the very agencies and organizations that are on the ground trying to fight racism? That is what I want to know.

Hon. Jim Fleming (Minister of State (Multiculturalism)): Madam Speaker, I believe the government has been most supportive of those immigrant settlement organizations.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Fleming: In fact, Madam Speaker, it was this government that established the increased acceptance of boat people in the refugee program, and I think if the hon. member lost a bit of his histrionics and theatrics and just waited a little, he would find there was some pretty good news for those organizations.

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ASTRA TRUST**COMPENSATION FOR INVESTORS**

Mr. Bob Rae (Broadview-Greenwood): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Finance concerning the affairs of Astra Trust and Re-Mor.