

Oral Questions

with the Government of Libya and that our Government had been assured that any Canadians wishing to exit would in fact be allowed to do so.

I wonder if I might ask if the Government has been informed that Canadians living in Libya now are unable to obtain exit visas because Government operations in Libya are not functioning and, even if there were ways of getting in there for normal aircraft, there would be no way for the Canadians actually to leave.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister indeed made reference to a communication we had received from a senior official of the Government of Libya. It is exactly as my hon. friend has reported it to be. However, we have no information that would cause us the kind of concern to which he refers. In fact the level of anxiety and concern among Canadian residents presently in Libya has declined substantially.

CASE OF CANADIAN FAMILY

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Prime Minister would be kind enough to investigate the case of Darlene Yarrow and her family who are now in Libya? Her husband is a teacher there. They want to leave Libya but they cannot obtain either an exit visa or a means of leaving the country. Would the Prime Minister determine whether that is an isolated case or whether in fact, as was reported in the press, she is just one of a number of people who have contacted our representative there in an effort to find a way to leave the country?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): I will be happy to do that, Mr. Speaker, and advise the Hon. Member just as quickly as I can.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, I wonder if the Prime Minister would be prepared, either later today or tomorrow, to indicate to the House clearly exactly what Canadians living in Libya must now do in order to assure themselves of immediate passage out of the country if that is their desire.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we have consular officials who are discussing this *sur place* with the Canadian nationals. We do not want to say anything which would exacerbate the difficult situation but I can give my hon. friend the assurance that we are in as close contact as is humanly possible with Canadian nationals and are working to ensure that any instruments they require to depart from Libya are made available to them.

EQUALITY RIGHTS

COURT CHALLENGES PROGRAM—COMPOSITION OF APPROVAL PANEL MEMBERSHIP

Mr. Roland de Corneille (Eglinton—Lawrence): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Hon. Secretary of State. Today is Equality Day and seven months have passed since the Court Challenges Program came into effect to enforce Section 15 of the Charter. Can the Minister explain why it is, still to this day, the names of the equality panel submitted to the Minister by the Canadian Council on Social Development have not been approved? There are 25 to 30 equality cases waiting in the hands of that council pending action by the Minister, and still not a dollar in the equality area has been put into the hands of those waiting for justice.

[Translation]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Secretary of State of Canada): Mr. Speaker, since the Court Challenges Program was announced, we have been working basically on the Sub-Committee on Official Languages and the Charter's applications with respect to official languages. About twenty cases are being examined at this time. The Sub-Committee was formed some time ago, and it is operational.

As for the equality panel as such, there still are a few adjustments to be made, and the Hon. Member will understand that where such sensitive areas are concerned, it is important that members be chosen for their integrity and their objectivity in order to ensure high standards on the Committee. I think that the fact we are taking the time to do so guarantees the high standard of the decisions that will be made.

● (1425)

[English]

PROVISIONS OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION

Mr. Roland de Corneille (Eglinton—Lawrence): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that nothing has been done on the equality panel. That is the short answer to the question.

Despite all the Tory election promises and the Abella Commission recommendations, all of which called for enforcement provisions, how can the Minister explain his support of an equality Bill which has been called toothless and phoney by the organizations, the people, and the groups which it is supposed to protect?

[Translation]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Secretary of State of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I think I did answer the previous question. We are establishing procedures in areas where human rights are concerned, where every necessary precaution must be taken. We are quite aware of the problem and we share the impatience of certain groups, but we do not agree that accelerating the process will necessarily produce better results.