

INDIAN AFFAIRS

RESTORATION OF BAND STATUS—HOUSING NEEDS

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane—Superior): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Indian Affairs. It concerns C-31, a Bill that was passed by this Parliament and is now law. The House will recall that this Bill had to do with the reinstatement of Indian persons who had lost their status and wished to return to their communities.

• (1450)

When the Bill was before committee, the Minister's predecessor said:

The Government is fully committed to ensuring that bands have adequate funding to enable new band members to be integrated with a minimum of disruption to community life.

What plans does the Minister have to provide the hundreds of houses needed this year for the women and children who are returning to their communities? There is a shortfall between the Department's budget and the actual needs. This is creating a housing crisis in Indian communities. When will the Minister respond?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, regarding Bill C-31, the Hon. Member is aware that when the legislation was passed the estimates of those who would seek reinstatement were grossly inaccurate. It is now estimated that there will be some 100,000 people of aboriginal origin seeking and obtaining reinstatement as Indians in Canada.

I believe for the infrastructure and housing to date the total is \$27 million. I am sure the Hon. Member is aware that within the government process there are discussions to identify the funds. I am having those discussions with my colleagues at this time.

AGREEMENTS MADE WITH INDIAN BANDS

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane—Superior): Mr. Speaker, the Minister knows that this year he has entered into a large number of agreements with Indian bands for the provision of these houses. Does he think it is right that he and his Government should be breaking these agreements?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I can only ask my hon. friend if he would identify agreements and I would certainly be pleased to look at them.

As he is aware, through the process there is an ability to put forward subsidized housing dollars for Indian people in Canada up to, in some areas, an average of \$30,000 per home.

Also, as the Hon. Member is aware, there is the criterion and there is the necessity of the band being able to complete those homes. We are having those discussions with bands at this time.

Oral Questions

AIR SAFETY

AIRPORT WORKERS—SECURITY CHECKS

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. It concerns the decision of his Government to force existing airport workers to undergo detailed security investigations, even if they have been employed in their positions for more than 20 years.

Will the Minister indicate to the House what proof he has that any employee, past or present, was actually a security threat at Canada's airports?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, all over the world Governments have had to take steps to try to protect the travelling public and their transportation systems from threats from terrorism and armed action which we have seen occurring for some 12 years to 15 years. Every country has had to institute certain checks on personnel who go into certain restricted areas of airports, who have access to aircraft or other sensitive areas like that.

Canada has to follow suit. It is distasteful in a free and democratic country such as ours that we have to take these steps. That is why the regulations have been brought in.

The House adopted amendments to the Aeronautics Act at the invitation of the Government a year and a half ago to give us these powers. We are now implementing these powers. Reasonable notice is given to everybody involved.

Surely it is not too harsh for a person to have to get a permit every five years to have access to these areas. All that is happening now is that when you need a permit, if your permit expires or you are a new employee, you have to go through these checks before obtaining a permit. There will be about 12,000 this year.

This is not unreasonable if we are serious about trying to prevent any possibility of terrorist acts in our transportation system.

REPORTED EXEMPTION FOR STRIKE-BREAKERS

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, if the Government were that serious about security, it would not have issued a telex on October 9 which instructed airport managers and security personnel to exempt any scabs from the requirements of this Draconian approach.

Perhaps the Minister could explain to the people of Canada why it is necessary to have massive security checks on the workers and their families but not on last minute call-ups to try to replace a striking worker. Could he explain that to the people of Canada?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I do not know what directive the hon. gentleman is referring to and, therefore, I am not going to attempt to explain it.