

Oral Questions

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I do not have to make the inquiries: I can assure the hon. member that neither he nor the honourable lady can find any incidents in which any minister of this government will have taken the position stated by the president of the Voice of Women.

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GAMBLING

GOVERNMENT POLICY ON OFF-TRACK BETTING

Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Agriculture.

On December 19 last, unequivocally, without condition and without restriction, the minister stated very clearly that before January 22 he would indicate whether the government was going to continue its policy on off-track betting, or change that policy. It is now January 23. I would ask the minister why he has reneged on that public promise.

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, just before coming into the House today I made a statement concerning off-track betting. I thought there were many unanswered questions on both sides of this problem. The great municipal body of the city of Toronto passed a resolution condemning off-track betting, and I thought even that great body would like to come before some committee. I therefore suggested to the leader of the Senate that a committee be formed, and he has assured me he will consider that suggestion. Such a committee could hear all the pros and cons and all the facts. Even the provinces which have been very quiet on this question could come forward and let their thoughts be known.

Mr. Lawrence: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. On December 19, the minister was surely aware that his cabinet colleagues were divided on this matter—surely the minister was aware that the Liberal caucus was divided—yet he blundered on and made a very forthright statement.

My question is: why did the minister make that statement on December 19, knowing that he would not live up to it?

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, I feel I did live up to it. Furthermore, the hon. member surely knows that in his own caucus there are pros and cons. He has not stated whether he is for it or against it, and I should like to know that. It would even help the committee, if it is formed, to have his learned opinion on whether off-track betting should become law. I have not received a letter from him either for or against it.

[Mr. MacDonald (Egmont).]

● (1450)

THE CONSTITUTION

POSITION OF OPPOSITION ON CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

Mr. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. Has the Prime Minister received official representations from the opposition regarding the negotiating position it would recommend for the conference on constitutional reform next week?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): No, Mr. Speaker, I have no recollection of having received any such representations from the opposition.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Provencher.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: I did not mean to interrupt the Prime Minister.

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I had finished, but hearing the laughter on the other side I can understand why there is no position of the opposition on this question. There are three: there is one from Rosedale, one from Prince Albert, and one from the Leader of the Opposition.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

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IMMIGRATION

POLICY RESPECTING IMMIGRANTS FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA

Mr. Jake Epp (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct my question to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. The minister will recall that in recent days he has made statements that he would be willing to accept additional refugees from the Philippines and Hong Kong if those two countries would allow the boat people to land there.

Is the minister now willing to increase the number of refugees, the roughly 5,000 he is contemplating landing in 1979 out of a total commitment of landings of 100,000? Is he willing to increase the number at least to the exemplary proportion of the State of Israel which has remembered the plight of their citizens after World War II? Many of us in this country remember the plight of our forefathers. Is the minister willing to increase the number of total landings for 1979 above the 5,000 he has recommended?

Hon. Bud Cullen (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, to the credit of Canada, we were able to announce—I think with the approval of Canadian citizens generally—that we have moved from 75 families a month to 200. That raised the figure to 5,000. The announcement was made in December.