

Oral Questions

week I raised the question of electoral reforms in the House. According to reports, the Government House Leader stated that the appointment of a committee to study such reforms has been shelved until at least the next session of Parliament. This leads us to believe that the Government does indeed have plans to proceed with electoral reforms in the House of Commons in the not too distant future. This seems to contradict the Prime Minister's statement this week to the effect that the Government has no plans to proceed in that direction. My question then is, who speaks for Government policy in that area, the Government House Leader or the Prime Minister?

[Translation]

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, I am not aware of the statement or passage to which the Hon. Member is referring.

[English]

REQUEST THAT PRIME MINISTER CONSULT OPPOSITION LEADERS

Mr. Girve Fretz (Erie): Madam Speaker, I wish to direct a supplementary question to the Prime Minister with regard to electoral reform, a question which I posed to him earlier this week. He will recall that the three Party leaders have failed to come to an agreement. That was his statement. Will he promise this House that he will not proceed with any action to implement such a policy without consultation with the Leaders of the Opposition Parties?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, if the Hon. Member is asking me about the policy that we attempted to have accepted shortly after the last election, the answer is yes. The acceptance of that policy by the Government was predicated on the acceptance by the three Party leaders. I think I told the Hon. Member that the other day. As far as I am concerned, that is a dead issue.

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NATIONAL REVENUE

SEIZURE OF CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY FUNDS

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Madam Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Minister of National Revenue. A few months ago officials of Revenue Canada moved in and seized the funds of Carousel Players, a children's theatre company based in St. Catharines, Ontario, which has been entertaining children for many years. These funds were seized on the pretext that the theatre company had failed to make remittances for UIC and Canada Pension Plan contributions. The Minister must know that virtually all theatre groups in Canada operate on the basis that actors are considered self-employed. They are very seldom employed. Will the Minister clarify his Department's position on this matter? With this action, is the federal policy being changed with respect to

Canadian artists? If this is the case, what other Government Departments or agencies have been consulted in this area?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Madam Speaker, for several years, the Department of National Revenue has been examining the insurability and nature of the employment of the persons in question. After a thorough study, it was determined, according to the customary criteria used by the Department, that their employment was insurable under the provisions of the Unemployment Insurance Act and the Canada Pension Plan Act. In the circumstances, the Department has no alternative but to request that both employee and employer pay their share of the unemployment insurance and Canada Pension Plan premiums. This was done, without prejudice to employees, employers or the work they are doing, and in accordance with the legislation now in effect.

[English]

EFFECT ON PERFORMING ARTS GROUPS

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Madam Speaker, can the Minister tell us whether it is the intention of the Department to move on other theatre groups across the country and do to them what was done to the Carousel group? Does the Minister realize that the arts community is very concerned about the effect this kind of policy will have on the work which these theatre groups do? I ask this because many of these people are employed sporadically and temporarily.

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Madam Speaker, what the Hon. Member just said merely confirms that a thorough study of each specific case must be made before the Department can decide as to the insurability or non-insurability of employment. The Department looks at the employee's status vis-à-vis his employer and also considers whether or not his employment is permanent, and a final decision is made on the basis of these criteria. It does not mean that a decision made in this particular situation will necessarily apply to other cases. I am merely pointing out that a thorough study is made of the case before a final conclusion is reached.

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[English]

LABOUR RELATIONS

WEST COAST GRAIN HANDLERS' DISPUTE—REPORT OF DEPARTMENTAL OFFICIAL

Mr. Bill McKnight (Kindersley-Lloydminster): Madam Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Acting Minister of Labour. As the Minister is well aware, Mr. Bill Kelly, the Assistant Deputy Minister, has been in Vancouver where he is monitoring the progress, or lack of progress, between the grain handlers and the elevator operators on the West Coast. Can the minister inform the House on the report Mr. Kelly has given to him on the situation as he now sees it?