

Oral Questions

I compliment the government and him on that appointment and endorse the words—the eloquent words—used by the Prime Minister when he said: “He will bring freshness and vigour to the post.”

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Diefenbaker: The minister having stated that he knows the dangers inherent in crime expansion, living as he does in Vancouver, I ask him, therefore, whether he would do something to expedite the private bill which I introduced to provide that any gun carrier committing an offence or endeavouring to commit one should, in addition to any other penalty, be subject to five years for possession of firearms.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Diefenbaker: I hope he will do this, because while the package for which we have been waiting for months does not seem to come, this would do something to meet the serious situation today when gun carriers are holding Canadians up to ransom everywhere.

Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of Justice): I would, first of all, thank the right hon. gentleman for his kind comments. I trust I can live up to the words of the Prime Minister he quoted. In answer to the question, I should like, if I might, to review the right hon. gentleman's bill to determine whether some action on this side should be taken with regard to it. I should like him to know that I share his concern about the present adequacy of gun laws; my colleague the Solicitor General and I have proposals which are presently before cabinet for consideration.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Since this question of a package has been under consideration for several months, I hope that this one suggestion, which will in no way interfere with the package and which would strike terror into the hearts of wrongdoers, will be permitted to be brought in and expedited through the House at the earliest moment.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

* * *

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS

TREATMENT OF EMPLOYEES TAKING FRENCH LANGUAGE TRAINING—GOVERNMENT ACTION

Mr. Dan McKenzie (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Transport. It concerns a grievance which has been directed to my attention by a group of CNR employees at the passenger sales department in Winnipeg. The grievance refers to the manner in which the Official Languages Act is being applied. After receiving the maximum amount of French language training which the CNR allows them, and passing, they are not designated bilingual. These people are now being demoted, with loss of pay, or being laid off. Will the minister implement an immediate investigation into the unjust treatment accorded to these employees and inquire why they are not receiving the 12-month language training courses as laid down in the official languages resolution adopted by Parliament in June, 1973?

● (1430)

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I will, of course, be very glad to look into any matter that any hon. member brings to my attention in sufficient detail so that I can follow it up.

Mr. McKenzie: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. As these employees are not receiving the proper job protection as laid out in the 1973 resolution, will the minister recommend to the cabinet that the resolution be made law by becoming an official part of the Official Languages Act?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I will not draw any conclusions until I have investigated the matter.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

REQUEST FOR AID TO COW-CALF OPERATORS

Mr. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture. Would he advise the House whether a specific program is being considered and will be implemented under the provisions of the Agricultural Stabilization Act to provide some relief, and hopefully some stability, to the cow-calf operators of Canada who are in a very serious state of affairs at the present time?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, we have had some meetings with the provinces and the different producer organizations and I can say this—I am sure the hon. member is aware of it. Some organizations are suggesting that nothing be done; others are suggesting that many things be done. I received letters from the Canadian Federation of Agriculture yesterday telling us what they think should be done. We are considering all of these proposals at the present time, though I realize some of them are late.

Mr. Mazankowski: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that in Edmonton on September 19 the Minister of Agriculture indicated that a cow-calf stabilization plan would be unveiled within two weeks, may I ask the minister why he has changed his position, or was he simply engaging in a game of hot air, or in a game of politics where he says one thing in one part of Canada and another thing in the House of Commons?

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, from what the hon. member has just said, certainly he should be the expert on hot air and politics, at least as far as I am concerned. I said that we were working on a program and that I hoped a proper program would be announced in due course. The hon. member knows full well that representations have been made by different people in the cattle industry. The Canadian Cattlemen's Association have been strongly suggesting that nothing be done, and also the Saskatchewan growers have practically said nothing should be done. If they are not representative, then let the hon. member say so here.

Mr. Mazankowski: A final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that the minister said in his