

Oral Questions

the difference is between the Special Employment Initiatives Program, which is supposed to be fast tracking, which has no public input, which has only input from regional Ministers, and the other four streams of his employment initiatives?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, there are several questions posed. The answer to the first one is that the list will not be an expurgated list. The list will not only be the one he asked for but one which is brought up as close to date as possible.

The answer to the second part of the Hon. Member's question is that the projects are suggested not only by regional Ministers, but are suggested by Departments, by Members of Parliament, by municipalities, and by a variety of agencies. No one is precluded from making suggestions as to projects which should be funded.

LISTING OF PROJECTS

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, it is important that the Minister come clean with this House because his credibility is at stake. The whole concept of accountability is at stake here. We are talking about \$300 million of public money which this Government has not accounted for to this House. I ask the Minister, whose credibility is on the line—he has already told us that \$288 million of this \$300 million has been spent—he has told us that there have been 844 projects approved—why is it that he will not release to this House, and to the public of Canada, the projects which have been approved. What is he trying to hide?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I am not trying to hide anything. As I indicated to the House yesterday, I am going to provide the list of projects—

An Hon. Member: When?

Mr. Roberts: If the Hon. Member who asks when had been in the House yesterday he would have remembered that I said I would try to provide it by Monday next, and perhaps even earlier than that, if I am able to do so. I remind the hon. gentleman who has posed the question that it is not only my credibility at stake. He reminds me a little of Queen Marie of Austria of whom it was said, "She cried and cried, and took and took." On one hand, the Hon. Member is now decrying this program to me in the House. On the other hand, he sent me a letter yesterday asking me to fund projects in his riding under that program.

GRANT TO COVENANT HOUSE, IN TORONTO

Hon. David Crombie (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. As the Minister may know, on December 8, 1983, the Liberal Member for York South-Weston announced in a press release that there was a grant of \$230,000 to go to Covenant House in downtown Toronto, in the riding of Rosedale. Apparently she

had, on behalf of the Minister, negotiated that grant during the months of October and November. At the same time I was negotiating with the Minister's own officials for 32 projects in my riding. I can assure the Minister that during all of that time neither I nor his officials—I checked this morning—knew of the fund the Minister is now talking about.

● (1420)

In short, behind my back, while I was negotiating for 32 projects in my own riding, the Liberal Member for York South-Weston, on behalf of the Minister, was able to negotiate a \$230,000 grant. Does the Minister think that is an honest, fair process? Is that what he thinks this democracy is about?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the answer to the first part of the question is no. I had not remembered that announcement. I think that I probably would be glad it was made. Is the Hon. Member suggesting he would prefer not to have that project take place in his constituency? If the Hon. Member is suggesting that because he has projects which he wishes to pursue, and which he is properly discussing with civil servants, then every other Member of Parliament is precluded from talking about projects which will take place in Toronto, then I think he is demanding for himself a role of veto inappropriate to his position as a Member of Parliament.

ROLE OF OFFICIALS

Hon. David Crombie (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, if the Minister wants to call his own officials in Toronto, as I did this morning, he will find out it was not only me and other Members of this House but his own officials in Toronto, all three of them, who deal with all job creation projects, were unaware of the fund the Minister and his Liberal friends in caucus were able to get. In short, what the Minister has done is totally circumvent any public accountability or process. There were 32 projects which were very important in my riding, and the same applies to other ridings. You do not have to know—you should not have to know—a Minister of the Crown in order to get a job grant.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member who posed the question is, I believe, a very serious and responsible Member of Parliament; therefore I take his allegation seriously. I would say that I would be very surprised if I found on verification the facts which he has given to the House are not that entirely accurate, but I will pay him the respect of trying to ensure whether his version is indeed entirely accurate.

SPECIAL RECOVERY CAPITAL PROJECTS PROGRAM—AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURES

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops-Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I want to shift attention to the Special Recovery Capital