

Oral Questions

● (1432)

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I do not know anything about this topic and cannot report to the right hon. member. I will inquire, but I have not heard of such a thing, inside or outside cabinet.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, the minister's reply would indicate, therefore, that the decision was made by the Prime Minister himself, and it also reveals his primacy.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I will bring a particular case to his attention because I know now, the cabinet having had nothing to do with it, who made the decision. Various universities are concerned about the fact that the government refused to permit the Governor General to pass on a message from the University of Western Ontario in which a request was made to have the Prince of Wales given an honorary degree during the centennial celebrations of that university. Some nine or ten months passed. The Minister of Labour may be able to answer this question; he is mumbling. That would be the most intelligent contribution he has made.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Diefenbaker: I would ask the Acting Prime Minister why, after a lapse of several months with no reply ever given, the request was turned down by verbal decision? Why was that done? The minister does not know, because the cabinet had nothing to do with it; but will he ascertain why the Prime Minister made the decision—and he must have done so?

This is just another example of the erosion of the monarchy which has taken place over and over again with the assistance of the hon. minister sitting behind the Minister of Finance. He has been one of the greatest offenders in this country.

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I cannot subscribe to what the right hon. member says. Her Majesty the Queen has come to Canada, since the Prime Minister has been in office, much more often than she came when the right hon. member for Prince Albert was prime minister. He should be the last one to ask me that type of question, because he knows very well that the adviser to Her Majesty the Queen of Canada is the Prime Minister of Canada.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Oh, is that right?

Mr. Chrétien: Whenever there is such a request, there is communication with the Queen and the decision is made as to how often the Royal Family should come to Ottawa. I do not think Canadians have been deprived at all of royal visits during the last few years.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, everything was answered but the question. What business did the Prime Minister of Canada have to direct the Governor General not to forward

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

that letter from the University of Western Ontario and hold it silent for several months?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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[Translation]

FINANCE

DATE OF INTRODUCTION OF AMENDMENTS TO BANK ACT

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Finance tell the House why he did not table the amendments to the Bank Act since he promised the House to do so before the end of March and today is the last sitting day this month? In addition, can he tell the House when he hopes to table those amendments?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to report to the hon. member that unfortunately the bill is not ready, and it has yet to go to cabinet. As soon as it has come back from cabinet, I shall table it in the House.

[English]

DRAFTING OF BILL TO AMEND BANK ACT

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, since the indication in the past has been that the drafting of these bills presented certain problems, could the Minister of Justice, who has responsibility for drafting legislation in his department, advise the House of the particular difficulties in the drafting of this legislation which has been in his hands for months? If this is so difficult, will he accept some official aid from the opposition in preparing this bill?

Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I cannot answer the question in full, for very obvious reasons. I would assure the hon. member that the cabinet, at the insistence of my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance, some time ago directed that the drafting of the Bank Act bill be given top priority in the Department of Justice. From that point of view it has been, and is being, given that priority. I would hope my department will be able to produce very quickly to my colleague a print of that bill.

An hon. Member: Before the banks close?

Mr. Basford: I note the hon. member's offer of assistance in the drafting. I would have to check his legal credentials very carefully for offering such advice. However, depending on the outcome in Edmonton of the next election, he may have an opportunity in committee, as a member of the opposition, to offer his advice on the quality of the bill.