

Oral Questions

Is the minister prepared to add some degree of certainty to our grain farmers and to their customers by declaring the grain handling industry an essential service from a labour relations perspective?

Hon. Marcel Danis (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I would like to confirm what the hon. member for Red Deer has said. In fact the work stoppage with the Alberta grain handling people is over and the work has resumed in Vancouver at the Alberta grain terminal.

With regard to the broader context of this issue, I would like to tell the House that our labour relations system in Canada works quite well. In 1991 we did manage to settle over 95 per cent of the collective agreements without any work stoppage.

However, it appears that the work stoppages seem to occur in the same areas. I have two areas in mind. I can certainly tell my hon. friend that in the area he is referring to, the grain industry, I will look with management, the wheat pools and unions at ways to improve the system. It is a concern to us and we know it is a concern to the farm community. We are going to do something about it.

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[*Translation*]

LINGUISTIC MINORITIES

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister. The government said that from now on the provinces would have to provide funding for cases involving language and equality rights. Did the government consult the provinces and the territories to ensure they would be ready to provide this funding? If so, when? And what transpired? If not, why did the government say what it did?

[*English*]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member is referring to the Court Challenges Program. The hon. member knows that this has been answered in the House on a number of occasions by the Minister of Multiculturalism and Citizenship.

The purpose of the decision was that a considerable bank of jurisprudence had been established in this particular area. This was never intended as a permanent program. We believed that the program had served its purpose and that if any further funding was required it could be funded by the private sector or by the provinces. That is consistent with the original intention of the program.

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, I asked whether or not the provinces had been consulted and what were the results of that consultation.

[*Translation*]

My supplementary is directed to the same minister. The Prime Minister praised the Beaudoin-Dobbie report on the government's constitutional proposals, including one of its main recommendations: "the vitality and development of the language and culture of French speaking and English speaking minority communities throughout Canada". On several occasions he said he was committed to equality rights.

Is the Prime Minister prepared to reinstate the Court Challenges Program or consider another program that would offer support similar to what we had before the program was abolished?

[*English*]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, that is really the same question asked in a different form.

The answer simply is that it is the intention of the government to discontinue the program because it has served its purpose. It has established a bank of jurisprudence upon which any future decisions can be made.

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BROADCASTING

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

Cable companies are trying to sell consumers more American channels and if they do not want to buy in they lose Canadian channels that they already have such as Much Music/Musique Plus. This represents a potential loss of income from advertising and audience ratings will go down. The negative impact on our business communi-