

Oral Questions

to raise the expectations of the people in western Canada, and that that is as far as it goes.

May I put another question to the minister. There has been the suggestion of a great miscalculation in the total amount of money to go into the Western Development Fund based on figures projected by officials in the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. If the minister cannot tell us what projects are being considered, could he at least indicate the size of the fund? How much money will go into this Western Development Fund, and over how many years will it function? Can the minister inform the House on these points?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, both the questions asked by the hon. member were dealt with in the budget and in the National Energy Program.

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ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE**RIGHT TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Solicitor General and it concerns another promise broken by the government. As the minister knows, members of the RCMP across Canada feel betrayed and double-crossed by the failure of the Liberal government to make their pay increase retroactive to January 1 this year as was promised to them last July. This breach of trust, which costs each member at least \$750, has shown the minister's div-rep system to be totally inadequate.

● (1440)

In view of the fact that many members of the force are now actively supporting the right to no-strike collective bargaining, will the minister explain his recent threat to end contract policing? Will he also explain his union busting threat to cut the size of the force if there is any movement by mounties to form a union, a threat which his colleague, the Minister of Labour, will recognize as being an unfair labour if such a threat were made by anyone else?

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General): Madam Speaker, if a 22,000-man police force, working from one coast of Canada to the other, were ever to have the right to strike, or to move in the direction of having the right to strike, the possibility of such a strike and the damage it might do to the security and order of Canada would have to be taken into account by the government. The mandate of the RCMP can remain as broad as it is, it can serve the Canadian people at three levels of government, in every province and territory, precisely because the force does not have the right to strike, and the Canadian people know they can fall back on it.

In so far as the preamble to the hon. member's question is concerned, I think the force has been served very well by the div-rep system. When the recent pay raise went before Treasury Board, account was taken of the fact that the RCMP does

not have the right to collective bargaining or the right to strike. It was taken into consideration that a group within the public service which does not have that right should be compensated for its forbearance, and that was taken account of when the pay raise was settled.

I have reviewed the record very carefully, and there have been deep misunderstandings. I think these misunderstandings, well intentioned, have been on both sides, on the side of the RCMP and on the side of the Treasury Board. Since then I have had several meetings with the President of the Treasury Board, and I expect to have good news for the force very soon.

Mr. Robinson (Burnaby): Madam Speaker, no one has ever suggested the right to strike. We are talking about the right to collective bargaining. It is the government's betrayal of its promises that will lead to the action which the minister is suggesting should not take place. His blackmail is resulting in the growth of the association of 17 divisions.

COMMITMENT TO MAKE PAY INCREASES RETROACTIVE TO JANUARY 1, 1981

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the President of the Treasury Board. He knows that the Treasury Board minute dated July 23 confirms that the 1981 contracts were supposed to start on January 1 this year. That was the promise that was made. Will the President of the Treasury Board confirm this commitment and explain to the House why he betrayed this commitment to the RCMP, and explain it also to members of the force? Will he explain why this incredible decision, a decision which really represents a shameful double-cross of members of the force, will not be reversed, and reversed very quickly?

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (President of the Treasury Board): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I believe the situation requires a certain amount of clarification for members of the House. First, in the year commencing April 1, 1980, the RCMP received an increase of 12.9 per cent on payroll. That translated to between 13 per cent and 14 per cent altogether in cost. That was set forth in the estimates for 1980-1981 for the year terminating March, 1981.

Last year there was an agreement in principle with respect to a change in the year to a calendar year. Treasury Board ministers felt that with the entire package of items put before them, the RCMP was very generously treated, and that particular change was one which was not in the best interests of the government or the taxpayers of Canada.

I would point out that, for the year ended March 31, the force had received a 12.9 per cent increase in that period. In addition, Treasury board ministers had agreed to a 12.2 per cent increase for the year April 1, 1981, to March 31, 1982, which translates into more than 13 per cent. In addition to that, other measures were taken, for example, reducing by one