

Oral Questions

tabling of the legislation to see what is in it. We already have in front of the House Bill C-20, which explains the Government's position concerning the CRTC and the CFDC. He will see, by reading the type of legislation in Bill C-20, that it is not the Government's intention to intervene to fix program content or determine who ought to be getting grants. My position has always been that there has to be an arm's length relationship between the Government and the various cultural agencies in all matters requiring judgment on values and program content.

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION ACT—REQUEST FOR EXCLUSION OF CULTURAL AGENCIES

Hon. David Crombie (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Minister understands that the basic issue here is artistic and cultural freedom. What is also important to understand is that the Appelbaum-Hebert Commission strongly urged the Government and this House to make sure that any change in the Financial Administration Act would exclude cultural agencies, to ensure that arm's length treatment the Minister spoke about. Will the Minister assure this House that if there is any chance that the cultural agencies will have their autonomy diminished by the Financial Administration Act, he will move, as the Clark Government did in 1979, to make sure those cultural agencies are excluded from that control?

Hon. Francis Fox (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I think it is quite clear that cultural agencies receive money appropriated by the Parliament of Canada. Obviously they have to be held accountable for the use of those funds. I do not think there is any grounds for disagreement between us on those questions. The essential element of the arm's length relationship between the Government and cultural agencies is the fact that cultural agencies are the ones which decide how those funds are to be spent once they are appropriated, what type of competition will be held, and how they are to be allocated to the various groups across the country. In all of those essential respects the arm's length principle as it exists today would, of course, be maintained.

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ABORTION

FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE ISSUE

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General in his capacity as Acting Minister of Justice. He will know that on this International Women's Day one of the major concerns of Canadian women is the inequities which exist in abortion legislation, which too often results in lengthy delays and denial of access to safe therapeutic abortion. Does the Minister support freedom of conscience on this sensitive moral question, leaving the decision to be made by a woman in consultation with her doctor? Will the Government repeal those provisions of the Criminal Code on abortion, in order to achieve this important objective?

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the question is really directed to my colleague, the Minister of Justice. I know he would want to answer that question himself.

PLANNED PARENTHOOD FEDERATION—GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare, whose Department has been cutting funding to the Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada despite the excellent work it does in promoting birth control and sex education, both of which effectively reduce the number of abortions. Will the Minister undertake to improve significantly the level of funding to the Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada, particularly in view of the very drastic cuts in funding which have been taking place in Provinces such as British Columbia where the Social Credit Government recently cut entirely its funding to the Federation?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I can go even further and confirm to the House that I was able to restore to its original level the funding of the Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada. I think that is excellent news for everyone, in view of the very good work they perform all over Canada, in communities and groups. Through my budget, which is limited and for a purpose, I am unable to replace the provincial Governments where they failed their tasks. I regret it, as do all Canadians, and particularly in this case, women and young girls.

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GOVERNMENT DECENTRALIZATION

ANNOUNCED TRANSFER OF HEALTH AND WELFARE BRANCH FROM HALIFAX TO SYDNEY

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board and concerns a recent report in the *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*. According to the article the Deputy Prime Minister congratulated the Member for Cape Breton-The Sydneys because "the Federal Treasury Board has just approved a \$500,000 expenditure to begin the transfer of the Income Security Branch of the Department of Health and Welfare Canada from Halifax to Sydney".

Does this mean that the Cape Breton Liberals are opposed to the Member for Halifax, or is this some kind of new job creation program whereby jobs are created by transferring employees around the Province of Nova Scotia?

Hon. Herb Gray (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, as far as I can recall, this transfer was announced a long time ago. It is not a new decision. However, I will be happy to check into the details. I would be interested to know exactly where my hon. friend stands on the issue of decentrali-