

substantial progress has been made and that the bill will be brought forward in the very near future.

Mr. Beatty: When?

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CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

DISPUTE BETWEEN CORPORATION AND QUEBEC JOURNALISTS UNION—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Madam Speaker, I was going to address my question to the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona with respect to why his party supported the amendment to the charter which he is criticizing, but that would be unparliamentary, so I will not do it.

[Translation]

Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Communications and the Minister of Labour, I will direct my question to the Prime Minister. Considering that the management of the CBC French network has openly shown ill will in their conflict with the striking journalists in Quebec over the past four months, and keeping in mind the ridiculous offer of a salary increase of about 8 per cent, does the Prime Minister or his government intend to continue burying their head in the sand much longer and to shirk their responsibilities?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the government is not burying its head in the sand; it is allowing free negotiations to take place between the parties and it has suggested the appointment of mediators. But I am surprised to hear the hon. member say that the government should do more and intervene in these negotiations. How? Through legislation to take the right to strike away from the workers, or what? What is his proposal?

Mr. Robinson (Burnaby): Madam Speaker, according to the union and the two major political parties in Quebec, the CBC management is alleged to have offered free air time to the political parties during the election campaign, provided those parties stop boycotting current events and public affairs programs. Given such inadmissible blackmail on the part of a Crown corporation, does the Prime Minister intend to step in to put an end to that and, if not, why not?

Mr. Louis R. Desmarais (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, the hon. member might be interested to know that the CBC is now negotiating with six unions representing 7,500 employees. In two of those negotiations the federal mediator has drafted his report and this afternoon it will be handed over to the parties involved. As to the blackmail referred to by the hon. member, I believe that the question ought to be directed to the Minister of Communications.

Oral Questions

● (1150)

[English]

WESTERN DEVELOPMENT FUND

QUERY RESPECTING CONSULTATION WITH PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS

Mr. Bill McKnight (Kindersley-Lloydminster): Madam Speaker, I should like to address my question to the Minister of Finance. It concerns the commitments he made in the budget of last October. There was a commitment that he would consult with the western prairie provinces regarding the use, the programs, and the specific initiatives for the Western Development Fund. I should like to know if the minister has consulted with the governments of western Canada regarding the use of this fund and, if he has not, when will he consult with those governments in accordance with the commitment made in the budget he brought down last October in this House?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, no consultation has taken place yet. When the plans are further developed in the government, it will be then possible to consult with interested parties, including the governments, as mentioned in the budget.

Mr. McKnight: I wish to ask a supplementary question, Madam Speaker. As the minister is aware, he made a commitment to consult with the governments. We are not talking about a small amount of money, we are talking about \$2 billion. This government has the authority to take \$37.5 billion out of western Canada within the same time frame. Is there a change in government policy at the moment? Senator Argue, the assistant to the Minister of Transport, has said, as reported in the Saskatoon *Star Phoenix* on January 15, 1981, that "... provincial governments will be given no special significance in those consultations." Is this a change in government policy? Does the assistant to the Minister of Transport speak for the government in this matter?

Mr. MacEachen: I have not seen what Senator Argue said nor have I talked to him on this subject. Without commenting on what the hon. member has said, what has been stated in the budget stands as government policy.

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AIR TRANSPORT

DIRECT AIR SERVICE BETWEEN OTTAWA AND NEW YORK

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Transport. I am sure the minister is heartened by reports from the United States that authorities there have been unable to find a U.S. carrier which would be interested in providing direct air service between Ottawa and the city of New York. In view of this development, and it seems to be a new development, would the minister undertake to expedite negotiations with respect to