

Oral Questions

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I have not used the word "minor" at all. The Hon. Member has built his case around the use of the word "minor", as if I had used it. I have not said this event which was being researched, and to which the Leader of the Opposition paid so much attention, was a minor event. It was an important event in the public and industrial life of Canada. However, it was not degrading to look into it, as I have explained. I have no way to answer the question which the Hon. Member bases upon a premise which I have never employed.

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EMPLOYMENT

APPROVAL OF FUNDS FOR PROJECTS ON INDIAN RESERVES

Mr. Doug Anguish (The Battlefords-Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. The question arises from some of the accusations of porkbarreling and Liberal patronage made against that Minister in the past week or so. My question is in regard to Canada Works projects in my riding. Programs similar to last year's were cut back. We now have about one-tenth of what we had the previous year. There were special allocations set up for non status, Métis people, and treaty Indians. Not one non status or Métis project was funded in my constituency. Many of the treaty Indian projects which have been around for some six months are not approved.

From the research I have done I understand there is an argument between the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Some of the reserves in the northern areas have in excess of 90 per cent unemployment, as opposed to the rate of 8 per cent which was assigned to my constituency. When will those funds finally be approved for the reserves in The Battlefords-Meadow Lake constituency and other constituencies across Canada which have to wait while this Minister and the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development squabble over how the money should be disbursed.

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman refers to some dispute, squabble, or disagreement between myself and my colleague, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. I can tell the House quite honestly that I cannot think of any dispute or divergence of view between us on anything at the moment. We have had some in the past but they have all been resolved, as far as I know. If the Hon. Member is alleging that there has been some delay in the Canada Works grants in his constituency because of a difference of view between my colleague and myself, that is simply not true.

In regard to the situation in his constituency in terms of Canada Works, I do not know offhand what the details are of the projects which have been applied for there, or what recommendations he has made. I will be happy to look into the situation and look at his representations.

FORMULA FOR ALLOCATING GRANTS

Mr. Doug Anguish (The Battlefords-Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, there is a six month delay in terms of having the funds approved. Considering there is in excess of 90 per cent unemployment, I think there is some kind of a problem there. The Minister should be answerable for it.

Instead of diverting these funds into patronage programs over which the Liberals have control, will the Minister look at the formula which determines the rate of unemployment? I know that within my constituency the rate of unemployment is not the 8 per cent upon which grants are based. The rate of unemployment is much higher than that. The Canada Employment Centres can substantiate that. Will the Minister look at the formula for allocating those grants rather than the formula of political patronage for their own people. Will he change it so it is more realistic and allows unemployed people to take jobs under this program albeit short term?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I am very impressed by the fervour with which the Hon. Member deals with his question. I would have been far more impressed if he had expressed that fervour earlier rather than waiting until members of his constituency were in the gallery to watch him. At any time over the past several months he could have made representations to me personally or in the House on this matter. I regret that he has not done so until now.

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[Translation]

CHARTER OF RIGHTS

LINGUISTIC RIGHTS OF FRANCO-ONTARIANS

Mr. Louis Duclos (Montmorency-Orléans): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

Throughout the debate which led to the adoption of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, senior Government Members kept repeating that the main purpose of section 23 of the Charter was to ensure that French-speaking minorities in Canada would have the same education rights as those of the English-speaking minority in Quebec.

In view of that, could the Minister tell the House if, from a legal standpoint, Franco-Ontarians can indeed seek for themselves the status given to Quebec's English-speaking minority when they claim the right to manage their own school system, and could he say whether, in the opinion of the Government, section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms does grant such a right to the Franco-Ontarian minority, "where numbers warrant"?

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, the Government advocates a very broad-minded interpretation of section 23 of the Constitution. The operative words are "minority language educational facilities" and our position in