

Oral Questions

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu): Mr. Speaker, I hope that if the minister believes in rights and freedoms, he also believes that Supreme Court decisions should be implemented, but unfortunately they are not.

Does the minister admit that the federal government miserably failed to ensure that francophone and Acadian communities in Canada manage their own schools, and to give them enough money to have proper schools, not like those in Kingston?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage): Mr. Speaker, I would like all these schools to be magnificent, but I can assure you that we do not forget those lacking these facilities. That is why a program costing in excess of \$100 million is under way to build and expand schools. This is a big country and we cannot do everything at once.

But I hasten to add that education is an area of provincial jurisdiction and what we can do is negotiate with the provinces to improve the situation. Negotiations are under way where the needs are greater and I hope they will succeed in improving the situation.

* * *

PUBLISHING INDUSTRY

Mr. Dan McTeague (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

[English]

The Canadian publishing industry represents a \$2.2 billion industry which directly employs over 12,000 Canadians. Many of these individuals are in my riding. However this is one industry that has been battered by recession, by globalization and by foreign competition.

Will the minister tell this House what his department and this government are doing to support the Canadian publishing industry which is so vital to Canada and all our ridings?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage): I share the concern of my colleague. It is indeed a vital industry. It is one we should support and we are doing so.

I can indicate the amounts we are putting behind that industry. We are providing over \$20 million in support to the Canadian book publishing industry under publication and distribution assistance for the coming fiscal year. We are also providing \$24 million in the coming fiscal year. The postal subsidy for the next two years will be over \$77 million. That is a total of over \$120 million. That is the support we are giving to that industry.

* * *

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Public Works and Government Services.

On November 4 last year the Prime Minister promised to examine the process of awarding advertising contracts. As yet no guidelines have been produced.

On February 1 a well known Liberal campaign manager who is also a close friend and former employee of the Minister of Human Resources Development became a director and owner of McKim Communications. Just three days later a federal contract worth \$5.5 million was extended to him. On the surface this appears to be another example of business as usual. I assume the minister must approve all these contracts.

• (1445)

Besides the ownership of this company is the minister aware of an employee or an officer of McKim Communications who is closely related to a member of his own cabinet, and could he identify that person?

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question because it gives us an opportunity to set the record straight.

Not all that long ago the hon. member stood in the House and indicated to members of Parliament that it was a \$184 million contract. Today it is a \$5 million contract. The hon. member should know that the Minister of Health has responded to the specifics of a question that was raised by a colleague, perhaps in the hon. member's absence.

However on the broader issue with regard to advertising, polling and communications, the hon. member is correct. The Prime Minister issued a directive. We are presently reviewing the policy and looking at the monetary sum allocated for the purposes of the particular program.

I am sure the House leader of the Reform Party would concur because in the substance of the question he did not in any way disagree with the government using polling or consulting or advertising for those purposes. I want to assure the hon. member that the matter is under active review.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear that the matter is under active review, but I believe there are enough questions of integrity on the particular issue that I would ask the minister, in order to clear this rather confusing and muddling answer, if he would initiate a public inquiry into this advertising contract to see if there has been any improper or political interference in the wording of the particular contract.

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, I am tempted to refer—however I do not think it would be politically correct in terms of the language of the House—to the question as silly.