

Oral Questions

The questions referred to the panel were of great importance both to the information highway initiative and to the satellite broadcasting system. We announced the review would be completed in an open way and it was done so. The panellists were named and received written submissions from all Canadians interested in the matter. Those submissions were made public. The public was then given an opportunity to provide written responses to submissions. Those responses were made public.

This afternoon the panel will make its recommendation public. I suggest to the hon. member she might wish to read it and perhaps then she will have some suggestions of her own.

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

The politics of this review has tainted its outcome. The review was ordered because the original decision went against Power Corp., a company headed by the Prime Minister's son-in-law. The review panel included Robert Rabinovitch, who has personal ties to Power Corp. and the Claridge Group, and Roger Tassé, a partner in Eddie Goldenberg's former law firm. If that was not bad enough, the government tried to slip the decision by the House to avoid public discussion.

Why was the DTH review not conducted as part of the industry department's information highway hearing or the CRTC convergence hearings?

• (1430)

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again we have an example of a shamelessly irresponsible member of Parliament making unsubstantiated allegations.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: I appeal to members to be very judicious in your comments when referring to members of Parliament. I ask you to keep this in mind in your questions and in your answers.

Mr. Manley: Mr. Speaker, there is a reason this process was followed. Very simply, as the hon. member knows, the satellite broadcasting system, the direct to home system, is one we are concerned about with regard to the very rapid growth of what is called the grey market.

It was important the government establish its policy in a very clear way as quickly as possible and yet attempt to make it as open as possible. We decided we would appoint a panel. It would hold the process as I described it in the previous question.

I want to make it clear to the hon. member that the Minister of Canadian Heritage and I received the report only this morning directly from the chairman of the panel. We will be reviewing it very carefully. I suggest to her perhaps she might like to. We

have not taken a decision as to whether the recommendations will be followed.

I would like to hear whether the Reform Party has a position on this important issue. I would be happy to take it into account before recommendations are made to cabinet.

The Speaker: I appeal to members to make both the questions and answers more concise.

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is again for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

The Reform Party has always favoured a review of Canada's direct to home satellite policy. We do favour competition but it should be done in a very public forum.

Instead, the government's review was a backroom, closed door deal to favour a bunch of Liberal bagmen. It is yet another example of the government's lack of cultural policy.

One day it is restricting competition in favour of Canadian industries, the next it is swinging the door—

The Speaker: The question please.

Mrs. Brown (Calgary Southeast): Does the government have a cultural policy or will decisions continue to be made in an ad hoc way to the benefit of Liberal insiders?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know what part of the universe the hon. member comes from. I do not know whether she knows anything about satellites at all. She is clearly accustomed to flying in spacecrafts, though.

In endeavouring to deal with this policy in as rapid a way as possible we have conducted a process using people whose reputation is really beyond being impugned, certainly by the member.

We have appointed a panel of three former deputy ministers, all of whom served under other governments. These people's reputations have not been questioned by anyone else, certainly not by this member outside the House where she might be subject to legal action. She comes in here and tries to smear three people who are offering their services to the government.

Perhaps if the member would read the report she would find her allegations false.

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[Translation]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. We have learned that, last November, the Minister of Justice awarded a \$22,500 contract to Earncliffe Strategy Group, a communication firm.