

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

MINISTER OF CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister continued to defend his Minister of Canadian Heritage and insisted the opposition provide new facts on the minister's \$2,000 supper. The official opposition has learned that Richard Gervais is not only the Minister of Canadian Heritage's political organizer and fundraiser and the recipient of untended contracts from him, but Mr. Gervais also lobbies for various associations and businesses.

It seems to me that my preamble speaks for itself. I therefore ask my question. Would the Minister of Canadian Heritage tell us whether he informed the Prime Minister that Mr. Gervais was not only his fundraiser and friend and the recipient of his contracts, but that he also lobbied the minister on behalf of a number of associations including the Canadian Tennis Association and Planetary Sports Television?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have already had occasion to say in this House, if there is one well-known firm in Quebec, it is Gervais-Gagnon, which has worked for many governments. Its activities are very well known. It does not keep its clientele a secret. There is therefore absolutely nothing mysterious or secretive in this situation. Everybody knows the facts.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we understand the minister's familiarity with Gervais-Gagnon, because this is the firm that does his fundraising, does him favours and lobbies him.

Would the Minister of Canadian Heritage tell us whether he took the precaution—the question is a simple one—of informing the Prime Minister that this gentleman was not only his friend and his fundraiser, but that he was also a lobbyist representing associations such as the Canadian Tennis Association, which last year received \$500,000 in funding from the Minister of Canadian Heritage?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when a fundraising event is organized in compliance with the rules, the first to be involved are the party financial officials.

I have said in this House that we followed the rules and procedures. I certainly have done nothing that the party was not aware of.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in light of the fact that one of the functions of Mr. Gervais's firm is to organize meetings between the minister or senior officials of his

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department and the people it lobbies for, does the Minister of Canadian Heritage realize the situation he puts his senior officials in when they are questioned by a lobbyist who is a friend of the minister, his fundraiser and the recipient of untended contracts from him? Does he realize that he thus makes it impossible for his officials to say no to anything?

• (1420)

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, never, to my knowledge, have any of the sports or cultural associations wishing to speak to me or to my officials used the services of Gervais-Gagnon. I can therefore say that the allegation by the hon. member has fallen flat—as a pancake.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Clearly, the Minister of Canadian Heritage has put himself in a totally unacceptable situation by becoming indebted to a lobbyist whose firm represents a number of groups dealing with his department.

In light of the new developments, can the Minister of Canadian Heritage tell us whether he discussed his case with the government's ethics counsellor?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us not forget that the Prime Minister himself rose in this House to say that he had raised the issue with his ethics counsellor. That is all I know. But, if there are other statements to be made, they will be made by those responsible.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

Given the incredible situation in which the Minister of Canadian Heritage has unfortunately put himself and the delicate situation in which his carelessness has put his officials, does the Minister of Canadian Heritage not think that the best way to rehabilitate his department is, unfortunately for him, to resign immediately?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when one obeys the rules, does what everyone in this House does, that is, attend fundraisers, and observes the rules established by Elections Canada, one does not harm one's department.

[English]

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, first of all I thank the leaders of the Liberal-Bloc coalition for excluding question period from their deal to muzzle Parliament today. This is truly appreciated by members on this side of the House.