

right hon. member for Prince Albert at a time when neither the Minister of Justice nor the Minister of Employment and Immigration were in the House. I indicated at the time I would like to have had notice of the question so that I could have checked with those ministers in order to provide the right hon. member with that information. I think the hon. member asking the question today should direct his question to the appropriate minister.

Mr. Jarvis: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to address my question to the new Minister of Justice. He may have heard the exchange which took place with the Solicitor General.

The larger question is this: in terms of drug prosecutions against accused who are citizens of jurisdictions other than Canada, there is available through CPIC, the RCMP computer centre, documentary evidence. In view of the fact that prosecutors in cases such as the Richards case are not regular Crown attorneys but, as the minister knows, are chosen from patronage lists of lawyers who are rather well paid for doing this, can the minister explain whether it is the policy to make available to those federal prosecutors not only convictions under Canadian law but convictions that may have resulted from accusations in other jurisdictions? If that is the policy, what on earth happened in the Richards case? Why did the judge not know about this?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member there is no difference in policy between lawyers in the department and lawyers who are hired to represent the Crown in particular instances. All the information that is available, is available to the Crown prosecutor.

As far as this particular case is concerned, I will inquire and check whether the particular facts the hon. member alleges are correct, and whether the Crown prosecutor had the information which the hon. member claims he did not have. I will report to the hon. member later.

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NATIONAL REVENUE

USE OF SOCIAL INSURANCE NUMBER TO OBTAIN INCOME TAX REFUNDS

Mr. J. R. Ellis (Hastings): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of National Revenue. Is it, in fact, a prerequisite that in order to cash cheques for income tax refunds, one must have social insurance numbers as identification?

Hon. A. C. Abbott (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Small Business)): Mr. Speaker, I was advised about the problem of people cashing Canada Savings Bonds requiring the SIN. Frankly, I will have to inquire whether tax refunds also require that. I will let the hon. member know immediately.

Mr. Ellis: Ten o'clock.

Privilege—Mr. D. MacDonald

PUBLIC WORKS

REORGANIZATION OF DEPARTMENT AND ELIMINATION OF POSITIONS

Mr. R. E. McKinley (Huron-Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Public Works. I congratulate him on his new responsibilities and wish him luck.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McKinley: I am sure he will need a little luck, with so much empty space being paid for by the government and so many buildings being built.

As indicated by the Deputy Minister of Public Works in a memorandum to all employees, the department appointed four task forces to investigate how the Department of Public Works might reorganize and retrench so as to eliminate 250 more positions as promised in announcements this summer. Since these task forces were scheduled to report by November 15 of this year, can the minister indicate whether they have in fact done so, and will these 250 positions be eliminated?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his good wishes on my new appointment. I assure him that the matter to which he refers is one that I have already discussed with my new deputy minister. We would like, indeed, to deliver what has been promised, namely, a reduction in the number of employees within the Department of Public Works. In order to arrive at this, we have taken into account attrition within the department and the possibility of appointing some of these people in other sectors, either the public or private sector. The report I have at the present time is that there are still about 100 employees for whom we have to find positions.

Later this week I will be appearing before the standing committee with respect to my estimates. I would like at that time to respond in more detail to the case of the 100 employees who have to find new jobs, and also to deal more extensively with the so-called accommodations that are vacant in the regions in order to give a more realistic report on the situation. The opposition has exaggerated tremendously the number of vacancies.

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● (1502)

PRIVILEGE

MR. MACDONALD (EGMONT)—STATUS OF WOMEN—MINISTER'S STATEMENTS

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, I want to raise a question of privilege arising out of the question period yesterday afternoon when an exchange took place between myself and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lalonde), the minister responsible for the status of women.