

*Oral Questions*

listed a number of diplomatic avenues to reopen discussions with EU officials.

Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs inform us of the outcome of the diplomatic initiatives mentioned yesterday and whether these initiatives will get things moving again, so that the dispute can be settled?

**Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we certainly intend to pursue as far as possible the diplomatic initiatives under way. The Canadian government's commitment to protect fishery resources threatened by overfishing could not be clearer. I can assure the hon. member that the Government of Canada will not go back on this commitment.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as part of these diplomatic initiatives, is the Minister of Foreign Affairs contemplating travelling himself to Brussels to defend Canada's position and try to reopen discussions with EU countries?

**Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am flattered by the hon. member's suggestion. Obviously, should my presence be required to achieve a negotiated settlement in this dispute, I will gladly do so. But for the time being, I think that the government officials responsible for that sort of thing are doing a fine job and will succeed in coming to an agreement with our European Union friends.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### CANADA POST

**Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. Recently some very serious allegations concerning possible conflict of interest in the post office have come to our attention. It seems that a Liberal senator and the chairman and president of Canada Post are closely linked to the Ottawa developer who built the new Canada Post building.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister whether he will instruct the ethics counsellor to investigate this very serious issue.

[Translation]

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the question relates to something which occurred before this government took office.

[English]

I would also like to say that the CBC, which made the allegation, apologized to the person concerned.

**Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious allegation. It calls for immediate action. Within weeks of winning this lucrative Canada Post contract, the developer, Mr. José Perez, was billed \$59,000 to finance the racing career of the son of the Canada Post chairman. At the same time, the

Liberal senator was billing Mr. Perez \$60,000 per year for business advice.

I ask again. Will the Prime Minister undertake to ask the ethics counsellor to investigate, give a full accounting to the House and open up these allegations?

• (1430)

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I just said that the problem was a problem of management of the previous administration. It is not a problem that occurred before we formed the government. At that time there were no ethics counsellors. I do not know if it is my job to get the ethics counsellor to look into the file.

If the member has accusations to make, he can make them outside the House and face the consequences. The CBC apologized because it had a reason to apologize. I do not think it was a well founded accusation, but if the member wants to make an accusation he can make an accusation and face the responsibility of making such accusations.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### REFERENDUM ON QUEBEC SOVEREIGNTY

**Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage. Mr. Jacques Michaud, the acting spokesperson for the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, asked Quebecers to vote "no" in the referendum, arguing that they can thrive more fully by remaining within Canada.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Mrs. Tremblay:** Will the Minister of Canadian Heritage confirm that his government has just granted a special, additional \$500,000 subsidy to defend the federalist cause during the referendum campaign in Quebec?

**Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, not so long ago, the hon. member accused the heritage minister of not supporting the French-speaking and Acadian communities adequately. But we are doing that. We are doing it to preserve the French language, in compliance with the Official Languages Act, and also the culture of these communities, and we will continue to do so.

**Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is a good thing that I have taken the floor, otherwise I wonder what the minister would tell me.

Will the heritage minister admit that the only purpose of this specific \$500,000 subsidy granted to the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne is to convince certain spokespersons of these communities to serve the federalist cause, by using public funds?