

Oral Questions

press was that advertising would be followed by a certain amount of free editorial page writing can the Minister of Justice indicate whether he feels this is an impingement upon freedom of the press?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member will appreciate that he is inviting the minister to express a legal opinion, and certainly a question asked in those terms is hardly in order.

METHOD OF SELECTING ADVERTISER FOR CAMPAIGN

Mr. Otto Jelinek (High Park-Humber Valley): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of State in charge of multiculturalism. Rather than calling for tenders for the advertising contract, which is the normal practice, did the minister exercise his ministerial prerogative in picking advertisers, and had the minister in fact promised the contract to Outreach Incorporated of Toronto as early as last December?

Hon. Stanley Haidasz (Minister of State): Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of any tendering procedure for advertising programs of the federal government.

METHOD OF PROVIDING FUNDS FOR ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN

Mr. Barry Mather (Surrey-White Rock): Mr. Speaker, having in mind recent criticisms by the Auditor General of the transfer of public funds without parliamentary approval, will the minister indicate if and why this was done, as indicated in this case by a senior civil servant?

Hon. Stanley Haidasz (Minister of State): Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the hon. member that I presented my request to Treasury Board after consultation with the Undersecretary of State and Treasury Board approved my submission.

Mr. Mather: Mr. Speaker, in view of the statements made about this situation, both in regard to the placing of advertising and the use of public funds, will the minister consider making a full statement on motions soon regarding this whole matter?

Mr. Haidasz: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

AUTHORITY RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING POLICY DECISIONS

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, in view of the absence of the Secretary of State I should like to address my question to the Acting Prime Minister. In view of the reported putdown of the Minister of State in charge of multiculturalism by the Assistant Undersecretary of State, Bernard Ostry, over the advertising budget for multiculturalism, can the Acting Prime Minister indicate whether or not it is now the policy of the government for a bureaucrat to make policy decisions rather than decisions being made by the minister in charge?

[Mr. Yewchuk.]

Hon. C. M. Drury (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is any evidence of a policy decision being made by the bureaucracy rather than by the minister.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I see four hon. members wishing to ask supplementary questions. The Chair will recognize the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville for the moment.

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, I should again like to direct my supplementary question to the Acting Prime Minister. In view of a recent statement by the Secretary of the Treasury Board as reported in the press to the effect that as far as business is concerned the best approach to shaping government policy is through the bureaucrats, can the minister explain whether this means that ministerial responsibilities are now taking second place to those of the bureaucrats?

Mr. Drury: No, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. We are obviously becoming involved in a debate. I will recognize the hon. member for Lambton-Kent on a last supplementary question, and then the hon. member for Assiniboia.

Mr. J. R. Holmes (Lambton-Kent): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the minister of state in charge of multiculturalism. Will he tell the House whether he has agreed to the instruction of Mr. Ostry that "in substantive policy areas, you or your executive assistant should deal with me or with the new Undersecretary of State, Mr. Jean Boucher"?

Hon. Stanley Haidasz (Minister of State): No comment, Mr. Speaker.

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FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL AFFAIRS

ALLEGED STATEMENT BY MINISTER OF JUSTICE REGARDING ATTITUDE OF FOUR WESTERN PREMIERS—GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. Bill Knight (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister. In view of the fact the Minister of Justice is reported to have stated that the four western premiers were looking with pipeline vision at federal policy and were primarily interested in their provincial kingdoms, particularly in light of the upcoming conference on western economic matters can the Acting Prime Minister inform the House whether the Minister of Justice was stating government policy?

Hon. C. M. Drury (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I was not able to detect in that particular statement quoted any government policy at all.

Mr. Knight: Mr. Speaker, the Acting Prime Minister has stated very well the non-policy of the government. I have