

Oral Questions

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, in the words of Allan MacEachen, that's better, it's a question.

• (1435)

[English]

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[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister took stock of his government's first six months. The unemployment rate remains unacceptable, the economy is stagnant and no real government expenditure control or economic recovery measures have been implemented.

Can the Deputy Prime Minister confirm that the turnabout announced yesterday by the Prime Minister on the subject of his participation in the Quebec election can be explained by the fact he has nothing to show Quebecers except for the climate of confrontation his government has created on various issues?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the only confrontation climate created in this House is the one the member from the other side is generating by not striving to find real economic solutions; he just keeps ranting because he does not want Canada to succeed.

The Speaker: Order! I would appreciate it if members would refrain from using certain words they have been uttering during questions and answers and also if questions were not so loaded.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, how can the Deputy Prime Minister speak of government achievements when, since January 19 this year, the government has presented almost nothing to us and no important and significant bill on economic recovery and job creation has been tabled to date?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, as far as I know, a budget is an important document for job creation in this country. It just so happens we did present a budget. We have already approved millions and millions in Canadian investments for projects in Quebec which will give jobs to real workers and not to those who refuse to work and just keep bitching.

The Speaker: Order. The members should please consider their words before using them. As I said, some terms are slightly loaded. I will ponder upon terms like bitching and will come back to you on this.

CONTRACTING

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board. I certainly expect an answer, not like that last outrage that my colleague got.

A recently released Treasury Board report indicated that the federal government spent \$5.2 billion last year contracting out services. Talk about a place to cut in this budget. That report did not indicate who received the contracts, on what basis the contracts were issued, and how values for these contracts were established.

To clarify this situation I would like to ask the President of the Treasury Board to immediately table all information that his department has currently. Also, will he indicate from 1990 on what those contracts were?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure): Mr. Speaker, the information that the member refers to is part of the review of efficiency of programs that we are undertaking with the public sector employee representatives, the unions, in an effort to find savings in government spending so, as we said in the budget, we can help to shorten the period of the wage freeze. Information was provided to that extent.

We are still undergoing our review of contracting and contracting out. I might add that that \$5 billion does not just include the kind of contracting out that the unions are concerned about but includes all contracting; everything from doctors for aboriginal communities in the north, for example, to the repairing of planes and ships for the Department of National Defence.

Certainly whatever information we can provide for the member and for other hon. members of the House we are quite willing to provide as part of the review of contracting out which will be dealt with not only by the Treasury Board but also by the government operations standing committee.

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West): I thank the hon. minister for a decent answer, Mr. Speaker.

More than 36,000 of these contracts were issued in 1992-93 alone. Some suspect that the contracts were given to friends of government rather than being issued on the basis of merit. This report also indicates that contracts were granted without public scrutiny and almost half were issued without a tender process.

Will the President of the Treasury Board agree that all future government contracts must be subject to public tender process?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure): Mr. Speaker, the period of time we are referring to in the statistics is of the last government, not this current government.