

Oral Questions

● (1415)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD*[English]***TELEFILM CANADA****REQUEST FOR CHAIRMAN'S RESIGNATION**

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): In the absence of the Minister of Communications, I have a question for—

An Hon. Member: Anything else you want to talk about?

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): There will be a lot of things we want to talk about. I will wait for the Minister.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Communications.

This government's policy on film and on Telefilm Canada is marked by a lack of direction, incompetence, abuse of expense accounts, mass resignations and political interference. In short, it's a complete disaster.

Mr. Speaker, in the last two days in the House, the Minister made misleading statements, incorrectly quoted the wrong source about Telefilm Canada's debt and tabled only part of the Executive Director's letter of resignation.

Yesterday in the House, the Minister stated that the Canadian Film and Television Association fully supported Mr. Jean Sirois as Chairman of Telefilm Canada.

Will the Minister confirm today that, in fact, the Association's Chairman, Mr. John Ross, has asked for Mr. Jean Sirois' resignation?

[English]

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday, I heard from the President of the Canadian Film and Television Association and he had indicated both their ongoing concern about the problems with Telefilm, and their desire to get those problems corrected.

They raised the question of reorganization within Telefilm and asked me to ensure that there would be consultation between Telefilm and the film industry. I have undertaken to do that. Those consultations will be under way tomorrow with a letter that will be sent out from Telefilm inviting their proposals with regard to appointments.

I would mention, Mr. Speaker, that the appointments to date are of a temporary nature, they are for a limited period of time, until the naming of a full-time executive director of Telefilm.

ALLEGATIONS CONTAINED IN FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER OF RESIGNATION

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, obviously the Minister was in great close touch with the Canadian Film and Television Association. Yesterday she said that the association approved Mr. Jean Sirois; today she admits that she received a letter and a notice from the President asking for the resignation of Mr. Jean Sirois. I am sure the House will be impressed by her very close contacts with the industry.

● (1420)

The Minister was advised by the Executive Director of Telefilm in his letter of resignation—and I am talking about the full letter of resignation which the Minister did not table—that Jean Sirois, her Conservative patronage appointee as Chairman of Telefilm, and I am using Mr. Pearson's words, "had engaged in expense account abuse, had helped arrange for financing for Hollywood movies instead of Canadian produced films, and had overstepped his mandate by providing financing for a film being made by a prominent Conservative in Quebec City".

The Minister was also provided with a legal opinion from the Department of Justice suggesting in strong terms that Mr. Sirois was overstepping his mandate as Chairman. What actions is she going to take about all these allegations?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I would advise the Leader of the Opposition that if he has specific charges to lay, he should stand on his feet and lay them, and he should not resort to smear and innuendo as is his wont and the wont of his colleagues. He does that time after time. If he has any charge to make regarding impropriety, or anything of that nature, he can be sure it will be followed up, as I followed up with the financial difficulties of Telefilm to see that those financial difficulties had management plans established and had interim management personnel put into place so that once again we could say that Telefilm is a success story.

If he doubts for one minute that I have been in touch with the industry, I will quote once again from the letter that I received. It says—

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Which one?

Ms. Copps: Which one?

Miss MacDonald: From the President of the Canadian Film and Television Association. It says: "Telefilm Canada is a success story and will remain a crucial part of the success of the Canadian film and television industry, and the membership acknowledges your role and your staff's assistance in the gains we have made", and that is dated February 19.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Minister would be willing to table that letter. We are talking