

*Oral Questions*

The Consumers' Association of Canada has not been speaking for the consumer.

He said that the Consumers' Association of Canada is nothing more than an extension of the very Department the Parliamentary Secretary represents.

Does the Minister concur with his Parliamentary Secretary that, indeed, the Consumers' Association of Canada is not speaking for the consumers? If he believes that, will he cut off aid to the Consumers' Association of Canada? If he does not believe that, will he confirm that he will continue to support the Association, and will he ask his Parliamentary Secretary to withdraw those comments?

[Translation]

**Hon. Michel Côté (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, again I say to the Hon. Member that the department's responsibility is to listen to the various spokespersons and interest groups and, as far as I know, the Consumers' Association of Canada does speak for a legitimate interest group. It so happens that I had a meeting this morning with CAC representatives, a meeting which ended just before the question period. Our discussions covered various issues concerning the Consumers' Association of Canada. As I said, the government has every interest in listening to all groups, including the CAC.

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### CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

#### APPOINTMENT OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa):** My question is directed to the Right Hon. Prime Minister.

The Government has appointed a committee of three, including a former CTV employee and adviser to the Prime Minister, to advise the Government on budgetary cutbacks in the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. My question is quite simple. Does the Prime Minister trust Mr. Pierre Juneau? If so, why did he not give Mr. Juneau this responsibility.

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** In the absence of the Minister of Communications, I can answer the Hon. Member. If I am not mistaken, it is an advisory committee that will be helping the Department and the Minister of Communications analyse questions that concern the CBC, among others, but for the time being it will help analyse the matter of budgetary cutbacks. This is being done to help the Minister ensure that as far as possible, budget cuts will be restricted to the bureaucratic level and will not affect employees of the CBC or other corporations. I think the Minister already gave this explanation, which is an entirely legitimate one.

[English]

#### CORPORATION'S MANAGEMENT MANDATE

**Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa):** Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the Prime Minister is failing to make a major distinction. Does the Prime Minister not understand that there is an important difference between hiring a group of outside advisers perhaps to suggest a change in mandate for the CBC, something which would be quite appropriate, and hiring a group of outside advisers, including a former political adviser to himself, actually to carry out part of the mandate within the CBC? Surely that is a management function properly belonging to the existing management of the CBC. Surely the Government has confidence in that management. Either the management should be given that job, or the management should be changed. The Government should not provide outside political interference.

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I see that the Hon. Member is horrified by the idea of someone having been involved in partisan politics having a right to advise the CBC. The proposition clearly does not outrage the present President of the CBC who is less horrified by partisan activity than is my hon. friend.

We have confidence in the management of the CBC. We propose to allow the CBC to proceed in a manner very much at arm's length, consistent with its honourable traditions. That does not preclude, nor should it preclude, a Cabinet Minister from soliciting expert counsel to assist him in his parliamentary obligation to analyse, and advise the House of Commons as best he can on ongoing developments in his Department, including the proper responsibility that he has for the general over-view of the CBC.

#### FREEDOM FROM INTERFERENCE

**Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister should clarify things with his Minister. The Minister has said publicly that there were two broad responsibilities given to this group. One was to discuss a mandate for the CBC. It is quite proper for that to be done either by advisers to Ministers' offices or outside groups. There is no question about that. The other mandate that he said was given, and this is in my own words, was actually to implement budgetary cuts involving programming within the CBC.

Does the Prime Minister not see that there is a major distinction between outside advice concerning policy, and internal interference with the decision-making process within a Crown corporation itself? Surely a Crown corporation like the CBC, which is the largest broadcasting entity in the country, should remain free of all outside interference from the Government, and should especially remain free of political appointees nominated by the Government, who are directly involved in management decisions.

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, if that is true, it will come as a surprise to the present President of the CBC. I say that without any malice, because