

Oral Questions

[English]

ALLOCATION OF MONEY

Mr. Doug Anguish (The Battlefords-Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the President of the Treasury Board. The announcement of the funding for the Prairie Branch Line Rehabilitation Program said it was to be given out during a five-year program, as pointed out by the Parliamentary Secretary. The largest expenditure is to be in the first year. I wonder if the Minister could tell us if the money that is to be spent over a five-year period is tied with an ironclad guarantee, or if it is subject to Treasury Board approval each year and therefore subject to the new priorities of a new Government that may come into power within the coming months?

Hon. Herb Gray (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to check into the situation and report back to the Hon. Member.

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THE ADMINISTRATION

LIBERAL PARTY LEADERSHIP CAMPAIGN—MINISTERIAL STAFF GUIDELINES

Hon. Allan Lawrence (Durham-Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. In view of the continuing allegations in the media, as well as now by personnel in the offices of certain Liberal leadership candidates, regarding the use by all candidates of staff or consultants who are on the public payroll, and the use for partisan purposes of government facilities and aircraft paid for by the taxpayers, contrary to the guidelines laid down in the House and elsewhere by the Prime Minister, I wonder if the Prime Minister could tell us what is being done to enforce these guidelines. For example, what is being done about the specific allegations made in today's press concerning the use by the Minister of Justice of his personal staff to further his leadership aspirations in violation of those very guidelines?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member alludes to general problems like those with aircraft. I believe that any problems along those lines have been dealt with, and I have dealt with any discussions or questions asked of me in this House.

The Hon. Member asked about something which was reported in the media today. I asked to be informed about it, and thus far all I can find out is that there has been an ongoing process of a shift in the workload for these people as they have moved from departmental responsibilities to leadership responsibilities. As this has happened, they have taken leaves of absence or have resigned. That is what I have found out thus far, and that seems to be a move in the right direction.

Mr. Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, if there is constant monitoring of those guidelines, then obviously the Prime Minister's guidelines were pretty empty rhetoric.

STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO MINISTER OF JUSTICE ON HATE LITERATURE LEGISLATION AMENDMENTS

Hon. Allan Lawrence (Durham-Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, as a supplementary question may I draw the Prime Minister's attention to a Canadian Press item from Montreal yesterday relating that the Minister of Justice, at a private breakfast, allegedly gave details of some important proposed amendments to the Criminal Code for the control of hate literature? The news report quoted the Minister as saying that he would make details of the amendments public tomorrow, that being Friday, not here in the House of Commons but at a press conference or a campaign meeting in Toronto, presumably because he is too busy campaigning to be here in the House.

Is it now government policy to make such important announcements on the campaign trail rather than in the House of Commons? Is it the Government's honest expectation that any such amendments will be passed before the summer recess, or is this simply another—

Mr. Speaker: The Chair has some concerns about the nature of the supplementary question arising out of the original question.

Mr. Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, it relates to the campaign activities of one of the Ministers of the Crown. I think it is a very valid supplementary question.

Is this another piece of huffery and puffery by a candidate on the campaign trail?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): For heaven's sake, Mr. Speaker, I do not know by what double standards the Opposition is trying to play. It is perhaps fair ball to draw attention to the activities of the leadership candidates, but no one seriously expects that during a leadership campaign Ministers will sit in their seats in the House every day to answer questions or make announcements. They are out there trying to be elected as the Leader of the Party.

In so far as their staffs are concerned, Mr. Speaker, I have set down guidelines. As far as I can see, the spirit of those guidelines is being respected. There may be one or two instances of slowness in getting around to following them but one can remember that there was a leadership campaign on the other side of the House—

Mr. Lawrence: They weren't gone—

Mr. Trudeau: Let me finish. That was last year, and I guess most Members of the House were out campaigning. They were not here. I would bet my bottom dollar that their staffs were also involved in helping them out.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!