

Oral Questions

My question is for whoever is speaking for the Secretary of State. Why before introducing such an important program did the government fail to consult the university community or its students and why was it that they had to find out about this program by reading *The Globe and Mail*?

Hon. Paul Dick (Minister of Supply and Services): In the absence of the Secretary of State, Mr. Speaker, I will take notice of the question. I believe there has been some discussion going on but maybe not with the same people that the hon. member was talking to. I will bring it to her attention.

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member can transmit this question to the Secretary of State or perhaps the Minister of Finance can answer the question. I want to ask how many banks have responded positively to the government proposal and what does this government intend to do if no banks respond to the government proposal, concede that the banks will dictate the conditions, or will it come up with a new program that is more responsive to the needs of needy students in the universities and colleges of this country?

• (1440)

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I was advised yesterday that indeed there had been consultations about this matter through an advisory organization that did include the students group. That was confirmed to me by the Department of the Secretary of State yesterday.

The hon. member can shake his head in the negative but that is a fact. It was conducted by the previous Secretary of State.

In so far as the other part of his question is concerned there have been submissions received. They are currently being evaluated. I think the cut-off date was March 12. There will be further discussions with interested parties as the new approach is being developed.

I think the hon. member would recognize that the system that was in place was deficient and faulty. What we are trying to do is improve it so it will ensure there is access to student loans for students and to ensure it is done in a fair and equitable way and at a reasonable cost.

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GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, it is a fundamental principle that no member of cabinet

should ever be in a position to benefit in a direct and financial way from any cabinet decision.

Yet cabinet has appointed the former wife of the Minister of Supply and Services to a high-paying job, an appointment that directly and personally benefits the minister by putting him in a position to apply to the courts to reduce his alimony payments to his former wife.

Would the Deputy Prime Minister explain how cabinet could make a decision from which a member of cabinet, the Minister of Supply and Services, is in a position to benefit financially. Why is cabinet clearly using public money to get the minister off the hook on alimony payments?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, that has to rank as one of the lowest forms of questions we have ever heard in this place.

To suggest that Judge Judith Parish cannot be a human being in her own right and be selected for the post of citizenship judge, which is a government decision, and to suggest there is something wrong with that shows there is something very wrong with the thinking of that hon. member and those who applaud it. She will make an outstanding judge.

If she is going to criticize the spouses of members of Parliament, senators, or anybody else in terms of positions they might have in this government she had better look around at some of her own colleagues before she starts digging in that sewer.

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, for once the hon. House leader is at least partly right. Any woman who has raised two children, managed a household and at the same time survived a political marriage is capable of carrying out almost any responsibility.

The question does not address the competence of the appointment. However, in light of the views expressed by both the House leader and the Prime Minister concerning the high esteem for women and their capabilities, esteem which I share by the way, can the Deputy Prime Minister please explain why Michael McSweeney, the Prime Minister's former baby-sitter and bag carrier, was appointed to a job at over \$100,000 while the former wife of a cabinet minister gets an appointment at half the salary just to help the minister out with his support payments?