

Oral Questions

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister uses the same hollow defence of patronage made famous by Brian Mulroney: "All my friends are qualified".

If the Prime Minister is serious about ending the political abuse of patronage, will he commit to making this process both transparent and available for public scrutiny?

• (1450)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, many of the jobs are advertised and people can apply for them. If the hon. member had any guts he would point out which of these three people is not qualified for the jobs that have been offered to them.

You cannot be unfair to people because they believe in democracy and are trying to get a party elected. Who is complaining because I named a former Tory minister in Ontario the chief justice of Ontario. Nobody got up to congratulate me for that. Who is complaining because I named the former Speaker as an ambassador? He is a competent person but sat in the House as a Tory. I will not apologize for that and I will not disqualify someone who had the judgment to vote Liberal.

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UKRAINE

Mr. Walt Lastewka (St. Catharines): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Now that Ukraine has voted in a new Parliament and is searching for means to strengthen its infrastructure and its economy, what role will the Canadian government play in its foreign policy relations with Ukraine?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to thank the hon. member for giving me notice of his question. I want to thank him and those with him who participated as Canadian observers to the elections in Ukraine. A number of parliamentarians, senators, MPs and representatives of various Ukrainian organizations in Canada were willing to devote some of their time to go there to witness a country moving to a democratic process. It is to the credit of all those who accepted to serve in these circumstances.

To specifically answer his question I want to assure him that Canada is committed to co-operating with the authorities in Ukraine to move this country toward a more democratic society, to move this country toward a market economy, and certainly to increase trade and good relations with the people of Ukraine.

[Translation]

CONTRACTS FOR ADVERTISING AND OPINION POLLS

Mr. Réjean Lefebvre (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister.

The cabinet has adopted guidelines for awarding government contracts for advertising or opinion polls.

Under these guidelines, a minister will be able to award contracts at his own discretion to an advertising agency or polling firm, without necessarily having to go with the lowest bidder.

Does this new cabinet guideline mean that the government is prepared to waste public funds for the benefit of friends of the party?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, no guidelines have been issued yet. The question is still before cabinet, and as soon as we are ready, the guidelines will be tabled.

Mr. Réjean Lefebvre (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is also directed to the Prime Minister.

With its refusal to adopt strict guidelines for awarding contracts to advertising agencies or polling firms, does the government mean that Liberal favouritism is not as bad as Conservative favouritism?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, obviously his supplementary was prepared before he rose in the House, because the guidelines have not yet been finalized.

In other words, the first answer applies to the second question as well.

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[English]

INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

The Deloitte and Touche draft audit of the Métis Society of Saskatchewan identified that minutes of the society's meetings were tampered with. Métis society members have been denied access to this draft audit.

Can the minister tell the House how he plans to deal with these irregularities and enforce the law?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the audit has not yet been completed or made public. I expect it will be made public by the end of the month and at that time I will comment on it. I do not think it is appropriate for me to offer comment before it is public and in the hands of members of the House.