

Oral Questions

These are taking place right across the country and I am pleased with the co-operation we have had from the airlines, even under difficult times, to make sure that transportation is better.

There is one disappointment I do have if I may just take this one minute. The national press has not focused on any of the work that has been done in this area, so that those people who are not able to leave their homes are able to see what is available for them and that the world and certainly Canada has opened up to allow them to travel.

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GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Madam Speaker, my question is for the government House leader and it relates to the issue raised by the member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte.

A few moments ago the minister refused to answer the question in regard to the statement of the Minister of the Environment yesterday who said “the people working on our campaign are not on the government payroll as is the case from what I understand for those who are working on other campaigns”.

The next statement was the following: “Mr. Charest did not say which of his opponents he was referring to”. In other words, which of his opponents was cheating taxpayers.

• (1155)

The minister has to answer the following questions: Has he been made aware of the charges made by the Minister of the Environment? What is he doing to protect the taxpayers as is his duty as Acting Prime Minister today?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, I did answer the question, if the hon. member had chosen to listen. He knows full well that the rules of the Progressive Conservative Party, as set down by the Prime Minister, are very clear. Nobody shall work on a campaign during the time they are being paid to work for the government in any capacity. He knows those are the rules.

I would ask the hon. member, since he stood up in the House with his colleague from Newfoundland and slandered Mr. David Small and Mr. Tim Ralfe, whether he would have the decency to stand up and apologize for those slanders.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Madam Speaker, I will let you decide whether the minister can make that claim of slander without any backing to make that charge against another member of the House. You may do that at the appropriate time.

Right now the minister has to answer, not about accusations I made but accusations made by the Minister of the Environment, accusations that he refused to elaborate upon when he was asked to do so by André Picard of the Quebec bureau of *The Globe and Mail*.

Will the minister now finally answer the question that has been asked here today? Will he tell us what he intends to do to find out from the Minister of the Environment who the Minister of the Environment was referring to about the breach of the rules and about the fact that people on government payroll, according to him, were bankrolling campaigns of other Conservative candidates? Will he answer that question?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, to begin with I would suggest that the hon. member reread what was said. It was not the Minister of the Environment who made that statement, it was André Picard.

The reality is, and particularly with respect to this leadership campaign, that which is written by reporters is sometimes a significant departure from what in fact actually happened.

I would ask the hon. member again, if he is suggesting that the allegations that he and his colleague made in respect to Mr. Small and Mr. Ralfe are substantiated and he believes them to be true, to make those allegations and take the traditional posture that if he turns out to be wrong in his allegations he will do what tradition requires and resign his seat.

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FOREIGN AID

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of External Relations.