

Adjournment Debate

What happened was that our former Secretary of State for External Affairs himself put into place the procedures that were to be followed by his own bureaucracy. From the information our investigating parliamentary committee received, those procedures were followed to the point.

Despite the fact that officials of the department followed all the procedures that were outlined, the minister absolved himself of responsibility and blamed those same bureaucrats for the quick entry of the Al-Mashats into this country.

It is interesting, I am sure, to the Canadian public, what happens as a consequence of being blamed for misprocedure in this House. The Under-Secretary of State has received a position as Ambassador to Italy and his associate is Ambassador to Brussels.

There was an investigation looking into a lost secret memo which was a key as to whether or not in fact, the minister was informed of the desire of the Al-Mashats to come into this country. That secret memo was lost.

• (1910)

The present Secretary of State for External Affairs has promised to do an investigation to search for this secret memo. In answer to my question last week, she indicated that this memo has still not been found. I asked those officials who were carrying out the investigation of the department to find the secret memo and make their report to the minister public. Since the hearing into this whole affair was a public issue and there is a strong sense in the public that there was a cover up, I think it is important that the government make this report public as well.

Mr. Benno Friesen (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it is important to keep the record straight on this matter. The question put before the House tonight had to do with a question the member asked last week with regard to the missing memo.

I should point out that nine-tenths of the remarks she made tonight had nothing to do with the matter of the memo that was missing and was part of her question. It was a polemic about the case before.

The hon. member also neglected to point out that while she was upset with the quick entry of Al-Mashat, so was every other member of this House, including

every government member and cabinet member. They were equally upset about that. She also neglected to mention that prior to Al-Mashat's entry, the two ministers in question had turned down the quick entry of another Iraqi diplomat which should have given clear signal that the ministers would not have, had they known, admitted Mr. Al-Mashat.

The member continues to talk about the secret memo. It may be that it was classified secret, but it was no secret. It was widely distributed to the members of the committee. The member has one. She has a copy of this and yet she continues to talk about the secret memo leading the Canadian public to believe that nobody in this House or anywhere else knows what the contents of that memo are. She knows very well what is in that memo and yet she continues to call it that.

There was an investigation conducted, as the minister promised, in the days of June 11 to 26 of 1991, just a few months ago. The security division of external affairs did conduct that investigation. It interrogated all the members of external affairs who could have had contact with that memo and did not find the memo. It discussed the matter with the RCMP, but since there was no criminality suggested in the action, the RCMP said that there should not be an investigation by that force and the matter up to this point, therefore, has been dropped.

FISHERIES

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Mr. Speaker, I rise to discuss the fishing disaster and the disastrous year it has been in Newfoundland in the total fishing industry.

Since May 9 I have been pursuing this with my colleagues on this side of the House. Letter after letter to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and to the Minister of Employment and Immigration and response after response, here we are almost the end of September and we still have not addressed the problem.

Since this House opened there has been a question or a discussion every single day in this House, on two occasions by the Leader of the Opposition. I asked a question of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans on September 17. I again raised the issue as a statement today. Yesterday, on September 23, and today, the member from Labrador raised the tremendous concern he had about the situation in Labrador, which is a total disaster. There have been no fish up there at all.