

Oral Questions

● (1430)

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the hon. member offered to send the document over to me. I do not have any knowledge of that document and I do not even know if it is authentic.

I can assure the hon. member that the process of self-criticism on this side of the House is one which I encourage. If the hon. member is so devoid of ideas that he has to reach back a couple of months to some statements made in the House—

Mr. Broadbent: Three weeks.

Mr. Trudeau: The hon. member quoted some incident that happened two or three months ago. He quoted from a letter from the Solicitor General which I believe was written before Christmas, and he says this is two weeks.

An hon. Member: It was held up by the mail.

Mr. Trudeau: I repeat that the hon. member is searching back to before Christmas to find actions of members on this side of the House in order to develop ideas for him to ask in question period. If this is an expression of my testiness, I just do not know by what judgement this House abides.

* * *

PUBLIC WORKSWASHINGTON EMBASSY ARCHITECTURAL CONTRACT—
MANDATE OF SELECTION COMMITTEE

Hon. David Crombie (Rosedale): Madam Speaker, my question is also for the Prime Minister. It relates to the selection of the architect for the construction of the new embassy in Washington. I am sure the Prime Minister recalls that when the selection panel for choosing the architect was set up there was a statement made by the government. That statement said at that time that the purpose, the mandate of the selection panel, was to “select by fair and objective evaluation, the firm considered to be the most suitable”. That is a direct quote from the government’s own statement.

What the government clearly had in mind at that time was to establish a panel to select—not a committee to advise. Why has the Prime Minister acted in such a high-handed manner to overrule the mandate of the panel and to reject the unanimous choice of the selection panel, which was the world renowned Canadian architectural firm of Zeidler Roberts?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I have a statement by one of the members of the panel which appeared in a newspaper a couple of days ago. He is quoted as saying that the panel generally felt that any of the 11 was physically capable of handling that kind of project.

Mr. Clark: Who said it?

Mr. Trudeau: “The major weight was the firm’s designability on that particular problem or what we foresaw as the

problem—” There is a misunderstanding, I believe, in the opposition’s mind on this, because repeatedly—and this was true of a motion moved by the hon. member for St. John’s a couple of days ago—there is somehow the feeling there was some plans or specific project submitted to this panel. That was not the case. There was no demand or request for a design, a mockup, a maquette, or any kind of detailed design. There was an assessment by this panel of some 300 possible candidates, and 11 were narrowed down as being able to do the job.

From then on, one has to ask oneself if the choice of four, and then one out of four, was to determine the government in accepting that choice. I have held from the beginning that there was no undertaking of that kind, and the government does not intend to give that kind of undertaking. We want to know, among a small group of architectural firms, which are competent to build a building such as this, and then we will make the choice.

Mr. Crombie: Madam Speaker, surely the Prime Minister understands by now that, by his action, he has hurt the professional reputation of a good number of very fine architectural firms.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Crombie: Indeed, he has broken faith with the architectural community. He has corrupted a process which was objective and open to all. That is the process which he has corrupted.

AMBASSADOR’S MEMORANDUM

Hon. David Crombie (Rosedale): Madam Speaker, in order to clear up any confusion whatsoever, will the Prime Minister now make public the memorandum which was written to the government by Ambassador Ritchie outlining the unanimous choice of Ambassador Ritchie’s group of the architectural firm of Ziedler Roberts? Would the Prime Minister make that memorandum public?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the hon. member is returning to the point I made the other day. The assumption seems to lie with the hon. member, as it did with the hon. member from St. John—

Mr. Crosbie: St. John’s West.

Mr. Trudeau: St. John’s West and other points.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: The assumption seems to be that the unanimous choice number one would have to be the government’s choice. That has been the position of the member for St. John’s and seems to be the position of the member from Toronto, somewhere—Rosedale.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Crombie: Very funny.