

Oral Questions

did the Prime Minister ask the Minister of Transport to take over from the former Minister? Is it because like all Canadians, the Prime Minister has lost confidence in our Deputy Prime Minister?

[English]

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): What a childish question.

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, if that question deserves the dignity of an answer, it is only to point out the outstanding capabilities of the Acting Minister, the Minister of Transport.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

REQUEST FOR RESIGNATION OF DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I ask the Deputy Prime Minister again is it not true that he has become a liability to this Government?

Some Hon. Members: Order.

Ms. Copps:—and in fact the Prime Minister was forced—

Some Hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Has the Hon. Member a question for the Minister in his ministerial responsibility?

Ms. Copps: And the only way we are going to—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Is the Hon. Member just going to continue the statement or ask a question?

Ms. Copps: I am going to ask a question.

Mr. Speaker: What is the question, please?

An Hon. Member: Ask her to resign.

Mr. Speaker: What is the question?

Ms. Copps: Does the Deputy Prime Minister not believe that the only way the stink is going to be lifted from this House is when he resigns?

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Hon. Member for Nickel Belt.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Hon. Members have the right to ask questions in this House. The Chair will decide whether they are in order. That is the fair way of doing it.

REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE REFERRAL

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. In light of

the fact that all the precedents in the past, the Mackasey precedent, the Axworthy precedent, the Murdock precedent in 1924, asked for a reference from the House of Commons to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, did the Deputy Prime Minister suggest to the ex-Minister that he should have followed that route of precedents and asked the House of Commons for a reference to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Acting Prime Minister): No, I did not, Mr. Speaker. If the hon. gentleman for Nickel Belt had read carefully the package which was tabled last September 9, 1985, he would recognize that there was a new process set out of which the Prime Minister may avail himself if circumstances justify adopting it.

Mr. Deans: They don't.

Mr. Nielsen: Those circumstances, in the view of the Prime Minister, exist.

Mr. Broadbent: I thought it was Stevens who suggested it.

Mr. Nielsen: That is the course which is being followed here. I would suggest in all of the circumstances that it is the fairest possible and most impartial course to follow without closing off any options to refer the report of the impartial investigator to a Standing Committee of this House.

Mr. Deans: Erik, you would never have said that from this side of the House.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, in light of the fact that these circumstances are no different in principle from the previous ones, why is the Deputy Prime Minister taking away the right of Parliament to look at the ethical behaviour of Hon. Members of this House? Why are you doing that?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, that is simply not being done in any way, shape, or form.

Mr. Rodriguez: Well, you are.

Mr. de Jong: Absolutely.

Mr. Nielsen: I can be helpful to the Hon. Member by suggesting that he goes beyond, historically, the September 9, 1985 tabling, back to the Starr-Sharp report and back to the circumstances which gave rise to the preparation of that report. He might then have a different comprehension than he does now about the correctness and appropriateness of the course being followed in the circumstances.

Mr. Deans: Totally inappropriate.