

Oral Questions

Gamelin. This man was not just an ordinary crook, but an elected Member of the House, and a Member of the Prime Minister's caucus.

This guilty plea and the preferred indictment process chosen by the Crown have now covered up the facts and background of this corruption, but the public interest requires disclosure of this information.

What steps will the Prime Minister take to expose and explain this insidious chain of corruption associated with his Tory Government?

Mr. Speaker: I know the Hon. Member feels very strongly about this question, and it is a matter of importance. I would just point out that it may well be administration of justice in the province, but the Minister is rising and we will hear the Minister.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs and Acting Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, as you indicated, this question relates to a matter that is still before the courts. I have no intention to make comment on it, and I would hope that the Hon. Member would show in his subsequent activities in the House a greater respect for the institutions of the country, including the courts, than he has shown in his first question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nunziata: Mr. Contempt himself!

VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENT QUERY

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice has failed to note that the matter I just addressed has been the subject of a guilty plea in the courts of this country.

Mr. Beatty: It's still before the court.

Mr. Lee: As the Minister of Justice and the Prime Minister know, common law criminal procedure permits parties harmed by an offence to make submissions to sentence through the Crown.

Will the Prime Minister make a commitment to the House to submit a victim impact statement to the court so as to impress upon the court and all Canadians the seriousness of these offences?

Mr. Charest: That is incredible!

Mr. Beatty: Where is your Leader?

Mr. Andre: Out of order!

Mr. Foster: I do not think the Tories like this question. Methinks the Tories do protest too much.

Ms. Copps: Ripping off the public!

Mr. Charest: Any other case you want us to handle?

Ms. Copps: How about Sinc Stevens' legal bills? Bribes, that is what we are talking about.

● (1450)

Mr. Speaker: In the circumstances, I think we should move on to the next question.

The Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville.

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CANADA-UNITED STATES FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

SOCIAL PROGRAMS—POSITION OF CANADIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Right Hon. Prime Minister.

During the election campaign, the Chairman of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce wrote a letter to the Leader of my Party, saying, in part, and I quote:

We have no fear whatsoever that our social or development programs will be affected by the free trade agreement, and we have said so repeatedly.

In the light of the statement by the Chairman of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce yesterday that his organization is now calling upon the federal Government to cut spending on universal social programs, including the unemployment insurance program, as well as spending to industry, which would take in regional development programs, I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether or not he is prepared today to say, in an unequivocal way, that he will reject the request of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce for this type of cut-back in government spending, and in fact maintain the level of government spending on social programs in this country.

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): The Hon. Member is quite correct in quoting someone as saying that the Free Trade Agreement will have no effect on the social services, the social programs