

Privilege—Mr. Alexander

Most of the next sentence appears in quotation marks and reads:

"We were never asked and only became aware of the investigation after it was well under way," he said.

The assistant commissioner then said this about the Hamilton city police:

"We have a criminal investigation branch second to none and there is no question that we were not capable of carrying out an investigation. We have handled investigations far more complex than this, ..."

The article goes on to say:

Regional Police Chief Gordon Torrance also said today that he could not recall his department being asked to carry out an investigation.

"We were not asked by the RCMP or anyone to investigate," he said.

It is evident that there is a serious and major conflict between the chief law enforcement officer of the land and others. He has openly contradicted the assertion of the local police of the city of Hamilton and of the Ontario Provincial Police. I suggest that this is unprecedented. It is incumbent on members to ascertain facts. When did the investigations begin? Who started the investigations? Who called for them? Why were they delayed, and who is correct, the minister, the local police of the city of Hamilton, or the Ontario Provincial Police?

Accordingly, if Your Honour finds I have a prima facie case of privilege, I would move, seconded by the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath):

That the whole matter of police investigations into the Hamilton harbour activities be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs.

Hon. Warren Allmand (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, the information I gave to the House in the last few days with respect to this matter was, of course, information I had obtained from RCMP headquarters in Ottawa. I did not personally get in touch with the Hamilton police or the OPP in 1972. I was not even minister at that time. Neither did the officials here in Ottawa do that. I am led to believe that the contacts were made at the local official level. I have now asked for details of how this contact was made and with whom.

Let me make it clear that the main issue in this case is that there was some wrongdoing in Hamilton. An investigation was undertaken by the RCMP. The wrongdoers were found.

Mr. Forrestall: Some of them.

Mr. Allmand: Five people have been charged, and three were found guilty. Today we charged an additional 14 individuals in this matter, and 12 more corporations. The investigation has been a very successful one, and justice is being carried out.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) is dwelling on incidents which took place at the beginning of the case, on discussions between police forces concerning who had jurisdiction. That is not the main thing; it is peripheral to the main issue. The main issue is that there was wrongdoing. An investigation has taken place and we found the people who are allegedly responsible for the wrongdoing. A large

[Mr. Alexander.]

number of charges were laid before today, and also today and, as I said, justice will be done in this case.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Withdraw!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Hamilton West gave the Chair notice of his question of privilege and, in accordance with what I indicated earlier, was given an opportunity to develop the contents of the question of privilege. In fairness, the Solicitor General was given an opportunity to respond. I should simply add that nothing that has taken place since I made my preliminary remarks persuades me that the hon. member has raised a question of privilege and not a question of debate. That being so, I will call on the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Brisco), who also wishes to rise on a question of privilege.

● (1420)

MR. BRISCO—ALLEGEDLY CONTRADICTORY STATEMENTS OF MINISTER OF STATE FOR URBAN AFFAIRS

Mr. Bob Brisco (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. On March 10, during the oral question period, I asked the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Danson) the following question as reported at page 3928 of *Hansard*:

Has the minister written a letter or letters to Liberal members of parliament or Liberal party members asking for the name or names of lawyers in the respective constituencies who support the Liberal party with a view to awarding CMHC mortgage business to these party supporters who belong to the legal profession?

The minister replied:

In no such terms at all.

I submit that a reply of that nature couched in those terms would indicate a generalization and infer that regardless of the specifics of my question, the letter had not been written to Liberal members of parliament with reference to the acquisition of the names of Liberal lawyers who handle CMHC mortgage business. On the same day, the same minister made a statement outside the House which is a direct contradiction of the answer he provided members of this House. I am aware of the fact that Your Honour has ruled on this form of question of privilege with reference to statements made by ministers outside the House, but surely ministers have a moral obligation to avoid flirting with the truth in these chambers regardless of what they wish to say outside the House.

In effect, the minister denied the import of my question in this House, but on the same day the *Toronto Star* carried the news story "Liberal lawyers handle most of Ottawa mortgages" and under the picture of the minister it states "sent MP's letter." The first two paragraphs provide the truth which I sought in this House. I quote:

Legal work on "the vast majority" of mortgages issued by the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation is handled by Liberal lawyers, Urban Affairs Minister Barney Danson admitted yesterday.

Danson made the admission after the *Star* obtained a copy of a "personal and confidential" letter—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The question of privilege put forward by the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr.