

SOLICITOR GENERAL'S POSITION

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, having spent four years as Solicitor General I am very aware of the long tradition in Britain, which is followed in Canada, that the Minister responsible for the police in Canada, the Solicitor General, should not intervene in any way while a criminal investigation is going on—

Miss MacDonald: He didn't.

Mr. Allmand:—with respect to individuals under investigation. The Minister himself said on January 30 on Atlantic Television: "It is not the function of the Solicitor General to get down, as the old law school saying used to be, out of the stands and get the dust of the arena in his eyes. It is not a good thing for me, nor a good thing for the process".

I would like to ask the Solicitor General again if he would do for any accused, as should be done under the Charter of Rights, what he did for the Premier of New Brunswick while that person was under investigation for a criminal offence? Would he do it?

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Solicitor General of Canada): Again Mr. Speaker, I come back to the former Solicitor General and make a point, which I believe is worth making, that is, there is a difference between a charge and being under investigation.

Mr. Allmand: I know that.

Mr. MacKay: There is also a difference—

Mr. Allmand: That is true, and you shouldn't do it while he is under investigation.

Mr. MacKay: Is the former Minister interested in my answer or not, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Allmand: It hasn't been very good so far.

Mr. MacKay: I am doing my best. Perhaps I have to contend with the type of question as well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1450)

Mr. MacKay: I want to say to him that I agree it is wrong, as the old law school dictum says, to come down out of the seats and get the dust of the arena in your eyes. But I say to the former Minister that it is another thing to elicit information that any person wants to give to a Solicitor General if the circumstances are proper.

Mr. Axworthy: About what?

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT STATEMENT

Mr. Mike Cassidy (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have another question on this issue to pose to the Deputy Prime Minister. In view of the public concerns which have been aired

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over the last few days concerning the events which have been debated or discussed in Parliament for several days, will the Deputy Prime Minister assure the House that when the Prime Minister returns there will be a statement by the Government concerning the propriety of all the actions and meetings which have taken place, both before and subsequent to the charges being laid against Premier Hatfield?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of any substantive allegation of impropriety, I am afraid I can give no such assurance.

Mr. Chrétien: The question is judgment.

Mr. Nielsen: We have had the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East, who should know better after having served four years in the portfolio, describe the actions of the Solicitor General at a meeting with the Premier of New Brunswick as an intervention in the process. From my understanding of his explanation, and what I have read in the media, nothing could be further from the truth.

Mr. Axworthy: What did they discuss?

Mr. Nielsen: If the Hon. Member believes that there has been an impropriety, any impropriety, during the conduct of that meeting, let him say so; then there might be some reason to go as far as he suggests.

Mr. Deans: It is appropriateness.

PROCEDURE FOLLOWED IN MARIJUANA CASES

Mr. Mike Cassidy (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that our judicial system is based on the principle of equality before the law, could the Deputy Prime Minister explain why it is that tens of thousands of people accused of marijuana related offences would not have a prayer of meeting with the Solicitor General during the period their alleged offences are under investigation? Why is it that one citizen who happens to be a Premier should stand above the law in that way, and is that not impropriety?

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Stupid question.

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I implore Hon. Members like the questioner, in the interests of fairness and justice, to put matters in more accurate perspective. The truth of the matter here is that subsequent to the meeting, which the Solicitor General has been very free in describing to us—he answered the first time he was asked the question outside this House—a charge was laid. That charge was tried in a duly constituted court of this country—

Mr. Hnatyshyn: And he was found innocent.

Mr. Nielsen:—and a verdict was reached. Surely we should not be, if I am permitted the expression, in the interests of