

Oral Questions

RCMP officers conducting the investigation will not be subjected to political pressure from the government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, the Solicitor General has already responded that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police is quite properly initiating its own inquiry into this matter and, no doubt, will do whatever it deems appropriate, as it always does in the course of these matters—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nunziata: Depending on who the defendant is.

Mr. Mulroney: Only the Liberals would suggest that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police has been manipulated for partisan purposes.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mulroney: Only a Liberal would suggest that. I tell you, Mr. Speaker, I think I could be certain of one thing. I will take the reputation for independence and incorruptibility of the RCMP above the Liberal Party 10 times out of 10.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Prime Minister a question about the damage control program relating to Senator Cogger.

The Prime Minister will be aware of Senator Cogger's statement made in the other place earlier today. Yet on November 3, while the Prime Minister was fully aware that an RCMP investigation was going on into the activities of Senator Cogger, the Prime Minister said the following: "An allegation has been made against him"—that is the senator—"and he has denied it. Not only has he denied it, he has invited the Senate to examine his conduct. What could be more forthcoming than that? I think it is the proper way to proceed".

In light of the Prime Minister's feeling that a Senate inquiry was the proper way to proceed while the RCMP was doing its work, I would like to ask him what has changed. Why is it that the senator is no longer prepared, or in favour, of having the inquiry which was considered the proper way to proceed three days ago?

Mr. Epp: That is not what he said.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): That is not what the senator said at all. Moreover, my friend says that the senator invited the Senate to examine his conduct, which he did. I thought that was an entirely appropriate thing to do.

The senator has advised the public that subsequent to his request for this kind of an inquiry he was informed via the Solicitor General in the House that the RCMP was going to conduct an independent investigation. As I read the senator's statement today, all he is saying is inasmuch as the RCMP has decided to initiate its own independent investigation, let it pursue that investigation to its end and hold in abeyance the Senate inquiry until such time as the RCMP has reported.

What could be more forthcoming and more objectively honest than that?

Mr. Kaplan: Mr. Speaker, could the Prime Minister then tell the House what he knows about the RCMP investigation that we do not?

Mr. Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, I do not know a single thing about the RCMP investigation, except for the fact that one was acknowledged by the Solicitor General. All I know is that the RCMP—

Mr. Boudria: You just said there was one.

Mr. Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, I am trying to give an answer to an important question. I have been asked the question; I have responded to it fully. The Opposition asks important questions that could have damaging effects on members' reputations. They presume not innocence, but guilt. When I rise, pursuant to their request, to re-establish the facts, they try to shout me down. That is a denial of justice.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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FISHERIES

Mr. David D. Stupich (Nanaimo—Cowichan): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Fisheries concerning the announcement yesterday that Canada would accept the ruling of the binational panel on west coast salmon and herring.

On October 23, the Minister for International Trade stated in the House that financial compensation to the Americans is "an option that is being looked at". This is