

Oral Questions

the fact that they wanted to see thousands of housing units built, and the answer they got from the Prime Minister was: Send me a letter of resignation instead. Is the Prime Minister at least prepared to recommend, not to ask, to recommend and explain to his Minister of Finance, who still does not understand the problem, that special rates are absolutely essential to get the construction industry going again and provide and maintain employment for thousands of workers. All the members of this House understand that.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, of course my members understand the problems presently facing the construction industry, but the same problems are also confronting small businesses, farmers—

Mr. La Salle: Small businesses should get something out of it.

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

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[English]

CRIMINAL CODE**REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE OF SUBJECT OF PROSTITUTION**

Miss Pat Carney (Vancouver Centre): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice who gave us the Charter of Rights and Freedoms but who appears to be more interested in protecting the rights of prostitutes and pimps who degrade and defile neighbourhoods than he is in protecting the rights of the residents who live in them. On Monday I asked the minister when he would deliver on his commitment to give the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs the power to deal with the issue of street prostitution which infests our major urban centres. In his reply the minister insisted that he wants the committee to study the problem in connection with Bill C-53 which deals with sexual offences.

I would point out to the minister that his Liberal colleague, the chairman of the justice committee, has already ruled that the committee cannot deal with the issue of soliciting without a specific reference from the minister.

Why does the minister continue to insist—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Question.

● (1430)

Miss Carney: Why does the minister continue to insist that soliciting can be dealt with by the committee when, in fact, his own Liberal colleague has ruled the minister's suggestion out of order?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development): Madam Speaker, I made that suggestion some weeks and months ago, and it was the critic of her party who refused, in committee, to agree to the discussion of the possibility of a specific reference. I wanted to make the

project as easy as possible. The hon. member should know that the official policy of her party when in power, as expressed by the minister of justice of the day, was that the question of soliciting on the streets was not a question under the Criminal Code but, rather, was the responsibility of the municipalities. This is still the policy of her party. At that time we had another alternative. However, in order to clarify the situation, I have offered to refer the problem to the committee. Unfortunately, I did not have the collaboration of the Conservative Party.

Mr. Clark: That is not true. That is a falsehood.

Mr. Chrétien: Therefore, I am having a discussion with the House leader of our party, and we will make a formal reference to the committee.

Mr. Clark: A falsehood.

FULFILMENT OF COMMITMENT

Miss Pat Carney (Vancouver Centre): Madam Speaker, in view of the minister's—

Mr. Clark: Falsehood.

Miss Carney:—falsehood, I would like to read into the record the minutes of the proceedings of—

Some hon. Members: Order, order!

Miss Carney:—April 22 of the committee in which his parliamentary secretary was instructed to see the minister on this issue and that Mr. Peterson was—

Some hon. Members: Order!

Miss Carney:—ordered to come back to the steering committee with a solution.

Some hon. Members: Order!

Miss Carney: May I remind the minister that many of the victims of his announcement are youngsters—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. member seems to think that she is making a speech rather than asking a question. I would urge her to go to her question immediately.

Miss Carney: Madam Speaker, my question is this: since the minister first made his commitment to introduce amendments to the Criminal Code in July, 1980, when he met with the residents of the west end of Vancouver, when is the minister prepared to act on that commitment made nearly two years ago?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development): Madam Speaker, I have said many times that cases have been referred to the Supreme Court of Canada, and I asked the hon. member to wait until the matter has been clarified by the Supreme Court. It is a logical position which all ministers of justice take in such