

Oral Questions

officers in Kingston, we were informed that senior Ontario corrections officials last week attempted to influence the way in which senior staff testified before the committee by suggesting that their careers could depend on what they said to our committee.

What action has the Minister taken to deal with this clear attempt to muzzle witnesses appearing before the justice committee, and what will the Minister do to ensure that no further such intimidation takes place?

Hon. James Kelleher (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I was aware through media reports of the concerns of the Hon. Member. As a result, we had occasion this morning to discuss these allegations with the Commissioner of the Correctional Service Canada who denies the allegations. He tells me that they are incorrect and without foundation.

Indeed, it was Correctional Service Canada officials who recommended and suggested to the Justice Committee that they come down to Kingston to tour the facilities, and have assisted them in every way in this endeavour.

Mr. Robinson: Well, Mr. Speaker, that is so far from the truth as to be utterly absurd.

REQUEST THAT MINISTER SPEAK TO PERSONS ALLEGING
INTIMIDATION

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the same Minister. We know that parole officers are deeply concerned about the impact of privatization, inadequate resources, and intolerable working conditions. Why would the Minister not accept the word of parole officers that, in fact, senior prison and parole officials have been trying to muzzle people who appear before the committee? Why will the Solicitor General not do the right thing and speak directly to those people who made the allegations, and learn for himself just to what extent his officials are trying to prevent the truth from being told about a system in crisis?

● (1500)

Hon. James Kelleher (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, as I have already advised the House, this has been discussed with the Commissioner who does not agree with those allegations.

In addition, over the noon hour I called the chairman of the committee and discussed the allegations with him. I can assure this House that the comments made by my hon. colleague are not shared by the chairman of that committee.

TRADE

CANADA-UNITED STATES TRADE AGREEMENT—
TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

Mr. Fernand Robichaud (Westmorland—Kent): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Deputy Prime Minister. Today the Dominion Marine Association, the Canadian Trucking Association, as well as the Canadian Bus Association have all come out strongly against the free trade agreement and are asking the Government to suspend negotiations on all transportation issues in the free trade agreement for a period of 90-days. The trucking and shipping modes alone carry over 420 million tonnes of cargo and employ some 400,000 Canadians.

Will the Minister intervene now and apply the 90 day moratorium demanded by these groups? There is still time to save this industry from the ravages of the trade agreement. Will the Minister act now?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, this is part of a pattern of gross over-exaggeration, induced hysteria, and plain and utter nonsense that is given us by Members opposite. The Canadian trucking industry is in no danger whatever, no danger, from the Canada-U.S. free trade arrangement.

An Hon. Member: Says who?

Mr. Crosbie: As a matter of fact, if it were subject to the Canada-U.S. free trade arrangement it would be protected in the future from the threat of any further American protectionist action. It is simply silly to say that there is any threat to the Canadian trucking industry from the Canada-U.S. agreement. The real dispute, the real objection, is to the deregulation that occurred with the Motor Vehicle Transportation Act, not with this free trade arrangement.

[Translation]

REQUEST FOR MORATORIUM

Mr. Fernand Robichaud (Westmorland—Kent): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary for the Deputy Prime Minister. This industry is totally unprotected. So how can the Government ignore the representations of spokesmen for Dominion Marine Association, the Canadian Trucking Association, and the Canadian Motor Coach Association? How can the Government ignore the representations of the 400,000 workers? Why not take action by enforcing the 90-moratorium sought by these associations? Will he do something to protect the 400,000 workers?

[English]

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, once again we hear wild, unsubstantiated silly statements made by an Hon. Member opposite. The Canadian truckers are in an extremely competitive position *vis-à-vis* United States truckers. Over 1,000 of them operate in the United States now. This free trade arrangement will do