

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 12, 1975

The House met at 2.00 p.m.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN SPEAKER'S GALLERY OF SECRETARY OF THE
TREASURY OF THE UNITED STATES, MR. SIMON

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am sure hon. members would like me to extend a warm welcome to the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States, Mr. Bill Simon, who is present in the Speaker's gallery. We have had very fruitful discussions over the last 24 hours. We are very glad to have him in Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The Chair has received notice from three hon. members of questions of privilege. They are the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander), the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Brisco), and the hon. member for Burnaby-Richmond-Delta (Mr. Reynolds).

All three notices pertain, on the face of it, to discrepancies or complaints about the quality of answers given by ministers in the House in recent days. I am, of course, duty bound to listen to the explanation of each member any time an hon. member gives the Chair notice of a question of privilege. In view of the fact that there are three of them, and that all three relate to a similar complaint, either about the quality of answers given by ministers or, alternatively, discrepancies between answers given by ministers in the House and statements made here or elsewhere.

● (1410)

I think I must caution the three hon. members that, again on the face of it, these constitute interesting questions for confrontation perhaps during the question period or other debates but probably do not, unless some other point is developed during their remarks, constitute questions of privilege.

I therefore propose, in the interests of all members of the House, to ask each of the three hon. members to develop the explanation of his question of privilege as briefly and concisely as possible.

The hon. member for Hamilton West.

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PRIVILEGE

MR. ALEXANDER—ALLEGEDLY CONTRADICTORY
STATEMENTS OF SOLICITOR GENERAL

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I certainly abide by the ruling you have just

delivered but I would suggest that I am not involved with the quality of the answers given by the minister—to whom I shall refer subsequently—but rather the contradictory statements that have been brought to the attention of the public and members of parliament.

My question of privilege revolves around the very strange and unacceptable circumstances involving the Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand), the Hamilton Police Force, and the Ontario Provincial Police. Your Honour will recall that on March 10, as recorded at page 3928 of *Hansard*, I asked a question of the Solicitor General concerning the need expressed by the Hamilton city council, as exhibited on October 31, 1972 by resolution, to have a full scale open inquiry regarding activities around the Hamilton harbour. The minister replied:

Mr. Speaker, it is true that in September, 1972, some person or persons from the Hamilton city council came to the RCMP detachment in Hamilton with certain allegations of wrongdoing with respect to the Hamilton harbour. On examination of those allegations by the local detachment, the local detachment felt these were matters which gave rise to accusations under the Criminal Code and in the ordinary course such investigations should be undertaken either by the Hamilton City Police or by the Ontario Provincial Police. For that reason, the officials went to the OPP and the Hamilton City Police but the latter felt they did not have the resources necessary to carry on that kind of investigation—this is what I am told.

Further on the minister indicated as follows:

They did decide to investigate in any case, because the others were not ready to do so.

It has also been alleged that the minister has indicated that any delay was at the police level in Hamilton. According to subsequent information we can come to the conclusion, and I say this with all due respect, that the minister either misled the House or has no idea what is happening in his department. Administrative negligence and incompetence are involved here.

After the minister made those statements one would assume that he knew what he was talking about. But then there was a strange revelation which is extremely damaging to the minister. I refer to statements made not only by the chief of the Hamilton City Police but also by an inspector of the OPP. In a lead story in the *Hamilton Spectator* of March 11 it is indicated:

The Ontario Provincial Police and the Hamilton Wentworth regional police today denied they were ever asked to carry out an investigation into alleged wrongdoings involving the Hamilton Harbour Commission.

Solicitor General Warren Allmand said last night that any delays in the harbour investigation were at the police level in Hamilton and not at the political level in Ottawa.

And what is most important, Mr. Speaker, is that the article goes on to say:

Assistant Commissioner Ken Grice of the OPP said his department was never asked by anyone to carry out an investigation.