

Supply—Justice

Mr. Fulton: I think perhaps I should refer to this question of the removal of lawyers from the list. It might interest hon. members to know that when I took office as Minister of Justice I inquired as to who were the solicitors who were considered by the department to be qualified professionally to perform services for the government of Canada, because I was taking over a new department and, as the hon. gentleman will appreciate, at very short notice. I was assured that there had been left in my department no lists of solicitors or lawyers. They must have been removed, and there was absolutely nothing to which I could look for guidance concerning qualified lawyers to work for the government of Canada. It was therefore necessary for me to start from the beginning to compile with my officers a list of qualified lawyers.

I can assure the hon. member that contrary to what he has suggested there have been a number of cases in which lawyers retained by the former government have continued to work for the present government. However, as I have said, I did consider it necessary to exercise my responsibility as to the advice I tender to my colleagues regarding whether a lawyer is qualified to work for a department or for an agency.

It does not follow, of course, that of those I have recommended certain persons must be used. That is the responsibility of my colleagues. After all, this is a government which believes in the doctrine of collective responsibility. I do not seek to question my colleagues as to how they administer their departments, and the details of questions such as the hon. member is pursuing must come, if they can be produced at all, from the ministers of the departments to whom I make my recommendations. As I said, these recommendations are matters of discussion between ministers or between ministers' offices and I do not consider it is any part of my responsibility to give details of the advice I have tendered to my colleagues. Indeed, as the hon. member well knows, it would be improper for me to do so.

Mr. Regier: Now I think the minister has been very plain and I should like to express my appreciation of his honesty in this regard. The minister is now saying, in effect, that he does not make any recommendations to any crown corporation as to what attorneys they may or may not engage. All he does is make recommendations to other members of the government, and I hope not too many of the backbenchers will regard themselves as members of the government as is the case so often over the airwaves of the nation.

[**Mr. Regier:**]

There are only a certain number of members of the government. The minister says he makes recommendations to his colleagues in the government. May I ask him how many departments of government he supplies with such recommendations concerning who should or should not be regarded as an agreeable attorney to act on behalf of the government?

Mr. Fulton: I think from time to time practically every department has occasion to request from the Department of Justice recommendations as to lawyers.

Mr. Regier: Has the minister at any time recommended to the Minister of Public Works that certain attorneys who were previously on the list of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation be removed from the list?

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Chairman, as I explained to my hon. friend I am not free, of course, to disclose the advice I give to my colleagues and as I have also previously explained every list that was in force previously was removed and I did not find any list when I came in as Minister of Justice.

Mr. Regier: In other words, then, I can safely assume that the minister abolished all appointments of the former government and made a list of his own making sure they would all be Conservatives?

Mr. Fulton: Not at all, Mr. Chairman. I have already explained to my hon. friend that the former government removed its lists when it left office.

Mr. Pickersgill: How do you know that?

Mr. Fulton: That question does not require an answer.

Mr. Pickersgill: That is insinuation and innuendo.

Mr. Graffey: And what we hear from you is self righteous indignation.

Mr. Howard: I wonder if I might deal with an entirely different subject matter from the one we have been discussing?

An hon. Member: That is good.

Mr. Howard: I wish to deal with the question of narcotic addiction, the problem of drug addicts and the effect they have on society and our penal institutions. The number of narcotic addicts in Canada is open to estimate but I am sure there are many hundreds the great preponderance of whom reside in or around the lower mainland portion of British Columbia.

Arising out of the need of a narcotic addict to secure money with which to purchase illegal drugs on the black market stems the problem of crime which expresses itself in the forms of breaking and entering, petty theft