

Oral Questions

However, it would seem to me that it is not a matter of using courts when one encourages Canadians to become citizens. That is the—

Mr. Nielsen: Ask Ouellet to look into it.

Mr. Trudeau:—policy of this Party, to encourage new Canadians to become citizens, and we are happy to be associated with it.

REQUEST THAT MINISTER APOLOGIZE

Mr. John McDermid (Brampton-Georgetown): Madam Speaker, my final supplementary question is also directed to the Prime Minister. Since Judge Alice McKeown, the then national co-ordinator of citizenship judges, upon learning of the allegations of the Minister of Labour which were made, by the way, in a letter to the then Secretary of State, said that the credibility of the Court of Canadian Citizenship had been seriously undermined, will the Prime Minister demand that the Minister of Labour publicly apologize to the Court of Canadian Citizenship judges?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, that is a return to the first question, and I said that I would take notice of it and look into the matter.

An Hon. Member: The same as you did yesterday.

Mr. Trudeau: I cannot say more on this day because I do not know what the statement was, the contents of the letter, and, indeed, I am surprised that a distinguished judge would use a Member of Parliament as a vehicle for his representations.

Mr. McDermid: It is a she.

Mr. Trudeau: If he has representations to make, I should think that he would proceed in another way than doing it in this open way.

INDEPENDENCE OF CITIZENSHIP COURT JUDGES

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. I have in my hand copies of the letters from the Minister of Labour to the Secretary of State which outline in specific detail a very serious castigation of the entire Citizenship Courts, a wide brush accusation of racism and of attempts to improve performance by the number of rejections. I am quite prepared to send these letters over to the Prime Minister. They were circulated to the so-called Met Pac group in his caucus a year ago. That is the Metropolitan Political Action Committee, I suppose.

In terms of principle, does the Prime Minister believe that the Citizenship Court judges should have independence in terms of political pressures being put on them by members of his Cabinet?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, of course I believe that independence should exist, but, not having seen the letter, I cannot begin to see the relationship between the question and the allegation of the letter.

Mr. Nielsen: The Minister should resign.

Mr. Trudeau: Just from the quotes of the letter I have heard, it would appear to me that a Member of this Cabinet, as it should be the duty of any Hon. Member of this House, would try to improve the citizenship process, and if he or she feels there is anything untoward in the process itself, then he or she should be awake enough, as are our Members, to draw it to the attention of the relevant people.

Mr. Nielsen: The Minister should resign.

ROLE OF JUDGES

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West): Madam Speaker, again my question is directed to the Prime Minister. The Minister of Labour has, in effect, made a charge that the Citizenship Court judges are a bunch of incompetents. I do not know whether this has any relation to the method of appointment on the part of the Prime Minister and his Cabinet, being that most appointees are Liberal devotees or wives of former Cabinet Ministers.

• (1420)

I also have a copy of a letter from the Solicitor General to the Minister of Labour, in which he gives a legal opinion that, notwithstanding the fact that there is some role for the Citizenship Court judges to play, no attention has to be paid to those decisions because the Secretary of State has the right to decide on citizenship matters, absolutely, without reference to the Citizenship Court judges. I wonder if that is the policy of this Government, that the Citizenship Court judges have no role to play in the applications for citizenship.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I think the Hon. Member is using a kind of perverse logic. He accuses the Minister of having made a charge against the Court. From my understanding of the reading of the quotes, the Minister was complaining about certain aspects of the administration of the citizenship laws, and surely that is not the same as making a charge. The Hon. Member, in his own question, accused Citizenship Court judges as being a bunch of Liberal devotees. Is that a charge, Madam Speaker, or is that a smear, or is that a way of showing his respect for the Courts?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crosbie: It is a fact.