

Oral Questions

provides jobs and is a useful expenditure of public funds, why would the Government Minister be acting dishonourably in a deal which is judged honourable?

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Member for Oshawa (Mr. Broadbent).

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CANADA-UNITED STATES TEST AND EVALUATION PROGRAM

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH MINISTER IN SRI LANKA

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister that also concerns ministerial behaviour. Just an hour ago I talked to the Minister of Justice in Sri Lanka concerning claims made by the Prime Minister in recent days in the House that, when that Minister was Secretary of State for External Affairs, he had made a statement in the House on April 29. The question I put to the Minister of Justice was as follows: does he agree with the Prime Minister that he inadvertently misled the House on April 29? The Minister of Justice refused to answer that question. What he did say was the following, which is interesting, and I quote: "The Prime Minister is the person who determines Government policy."

How does the Prime Minister interpret the refusal by his Minister of Justice to confirm the assertion that he misled the House last April?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I can certainly understand the Minister of Justice, being in Sri Lanka on Government business, if he gets a phone call from the Leader of the New Democratic Party concerning some discussion in the House of Commons. I would suspect there would be some trap there and I would not want to answer that kind of question. I would say, "Ed, wait until I come back. I will look at the record and discuss it with you, but what are you phoning me here for?" He is not in a parliamentary forum over there.

REQUEST FOR STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, what the Prime Minister had to say, if it pertained to all the facts, would be entirely reasonable. However, the Minister of Justice made it clear to me that he had been briefed on the exchange that had taken place in the House in the past couple of days. He knew in short what the facts of the past two days were all about. I would like to ask the Prime Minister this. Is it not a little unusual that a Minister who is responsible to him, when confronted with the claim made by his Prime Minister that he had inadvertently misled the House last April, refuses to confirm that? Then he goes on to add that it is the Prime Minister who determines policy. The implication of that would seem to me to be that he, Mr. MacGuigan, stands by what he said, and is implying that the Prime Minister is doing some

swift changing of history in terms of what transpired between last April and the present. Would the Prime Minister comment on that?

• (1430)

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, to be perfectly blunt, if I received a phone call like that from the Hon. Leader of the New Democratic Party, when I was half way around the world, about something which is going on in Parliament and apparently showed a contradiction between Ministers, I would tell him to "drop dead". I would tell him that I would be back in a few days and would be able to deal with the question then. If the Leader of the New Democratic Party is asking for my comment, that is it. But if he really wants to get to the substance of the issue, as his seatmate did yesterday, I would give the same answers, Madam Speaker.

I would concede from the outset that the Government had been contemplating the possibility of testing the Cruise. We knew that this was at the back of the mind of the American administration when it was asking for a weapons-testing system. In that sense whether the former Secretary of State for External Affairs used exactly the right words or not, I am not prepared to say. I am anxious to hear his own explanation.

As to the intent of the former Secretary of State for External Affairs, Madam Speaker, I have no quarrel with it. We all know that the Cruise is at the end of the road. That is what is worrying so many Members of the New Democratic Party. That will be the big test. It will not be firing some 303 rifle. It will be whether we allow the Cruise testing or not. That was in Cabinet's mind when we discussed this whole subject.

What I say, what I will repeat, and what I have even said in a letter to the Hon. Member's seatmate sometime last March, is that in fact Cabinet has made no decision on the Cruise. It has made a decision on weapons-testing systems, an umbrella agreement.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: The Cruise, we know—well—

An Hon. Member: Malarkey.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister does not seem to recognize that the point at issue here, among others, is that the former Secretary of State for External Affairs has said, not once, but if I remember correctly, three times, that the Government had made a decision in principle to test the Cruise. And it is the Prime Minister in this House who stood up on Monday and said that is not the case. If the Prime Minister stands by that, if the Prime Minister is saying that since last April the Government has not been committed in principle to testing the Cruise, I ask him how in God's name could a Government let ten months go