

Oral Questions

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, if the Hon. Member quotes me I wish he would quote me completely and accurately. I stated then, and I state again, and the Hon. Member would have to admit if he were being honest, there is nothing in Bill C-22 which would cause the price of an existing drug to go up by a penny. His Leader admitted that in the House on one occasion.

An Hon. Member: That wasn't the question.

Mr. Andre: That was the accusation. Bill C-22 did not cause the price of a drug to increase by a penny. The question is can we now go back and reopen Bill C-22 and bring forward amendments—

An Hon. Member: No.

Mr. Andre: —to put in place some retroactive—

Mr. Rodriguez: Retroactive power.

Mr. Andre: The Hon. Member is shouting from his seat that I should take unto myself powers not granted by Parliament. Would he extend that to other areas of responsibility as well?

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IMMIGRATION**REFUGEE STATUS ADVISORY COMMITTEE—REVERSAL OF
DECISION—MINISTER'S LETTERS**

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. It concerns the extraordinary interference by the Minister in the independence of the refugee determination system in the case of Mr. Santokh Singh. Following a unanimous ruling in favour of refugee status by the three distinguished members of the Refugee Status Advisory Committee, the Minister wrote two secret letters to the then Minister of Immigration and asked for and received an immediate reversal of this decision.

Can the Secretary of State for External Affairs inform this House why he intervened with the then Minister of Immigration and asked that the decision, which was independent and unanimous based on refugee advice from refugee experts, be overturned? What were the reasons that motivated the Minister's actions?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as is unfortunately too often the case with the Hon. Member, the facts that he has put upon the record of the House of Commons are not correct. They are not the facts.

What I was doing in that case was conveying to my colleague, as it is my duty, information that might have been relevant to the decision of that colleague. It may be that in the

Liberal Government a Minister, who had information relevant to a decision another Minister was taking, would not pass on that information. That is not the way we act in this Government.

Mr. Marchi: Mr. Speaker, the trouble with the Minister is that he is offering no facts at all. That is simply not good enough for this House nor for Canadians, nor for the integrity and the independence of the system.

POSITION OF SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, in one of the Minister's two letters to the then Minister of Immigration he said and wrote:

Indian authorities have made strong and repeated representations for his return to India.

Given that both the Foreign Affairs Minister for India and the Indian High Commissioner to Canada have said that they have never put pressure on Canada, that they never sought extradition and never suggested refusing him status, and said, "As of now, there is no case", can the Minister explain again to this House this glaring and very serious contradiction? If the Government received a clearance from both CSIS and the RCMP in terms of security, what were the motivating reasons underlying such an unprecedented interference by the Minister in the running of refugee matters by the Minister of Immigration?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, first, I may have done an injustice to the Liberal Party and I certainly would not want to do that.

The practice that I followed in this case of communicating information to the Minister of Employment and Immigration, when that information came to my attention as Secretary of State for External Affairs, is the same practice that was followed by the Hon. Jean Chrétien when he held this portfolio, in correspondence with the then Minister of Employment and Immigration, and followed by the Opposition House Leader in the other place when he held this portfolio in terms of cases that were then before our colleague, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry, in his capacity as Minister of Employment and Immigration. That has just been confirmed from his place by the Hon. Member for York Centre.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): What was the reason for the intervention?

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): The practice has been in place for some time, Mr. Speaker. I followed that practice. When information becomes available that is relevant to a decision being taken by a Minister, information that comes to me in my official capacity, information by its nature that should be conveyed secretly, then I convey that information.