

As far as my own conduct is concerned, I always took the position that I would wait for the report of the Chief Justice before investigating into the courts, and I still maintain that was the proper conduct. Indeed, that applied also to the conduct of my ministers. On the question itself, I have launched an investigation, to use the words of the hon. member. I discussed this matter at some length with both ministers. I am satisfied, as I told the House a moment ago, about their conduct. In so far as the police having suspicions about other people is concerned, not in my cabinet and not in this House, the matter has been turned over to the attorney general of the province, and he will take whatever measures he feels are proper. In so far as the responsibilities of the minister are concerned, I have discussed that with them.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, in view of the references made yesterday by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, I wonder whether the Prime Minister would give us an assurance before Easter. I think it would be proper for the Prime Minister to make an investigation as soon as possible. Therefore, perhaps he will assure us that in order to make sure he is fully apprised of the facts he will communicate with the attorney general or, indeed, the RCMP to see what information there might be that would assist him in coming to a conclusion as to whether there has been any impropriety on the part of senior staff members in ministers' offices and report to us, as I say, before Easter?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this invitation from the opposition because normally I would not ask the police to make a report to me on their investigations. If I did I am sure the opposition would claim I should not be interfering with the police by asking them what they are doing there.

Mr. Clark: You did in the case of the Hamilton harbour.

Mr. Trudeau: I did not in any case. Mr. Speaker, I will, following this series of comments, undertake to talk to the police as early as possible, Monday if they are prepared to see me, to ask them to confirm what I already have from the ministers, namely, that the police have no reason to believe the ministers are involved in wrongdoing. I hope the House will not ask me also to conduct an investigation into other people who are being considered for charges by the courts of justice.

In so far as the ministers are concerned, I repeat the fact that the police have not alerted me to any wrongdoing, giving me a prima facie case to believe that the police have no suspicion and no cause to believe the ministers are involved. It has been a long standing practice that when police are investigating ministers they let the Prime Minister know. In this case they have not found it necessary to tell me they had any suspicion of wrongdoing in the matter. I will satisfy the member and ask the police to give me a much more complete report than they usually do.

Oral Questions

NORTHERN AFFAIRS

FAILURE OF MINISTER TO BE AWARE OF ISSUANCE OF EXPLORATORY PERMITS—PROMISE OF CONSULTATION WITH INUIT

Mr. Stuart Leggatt (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development I would direct my question to the Prime Minister. On Wednesday of this week in answer to a question by the member for Northwest Territories the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development indicated he was unaware of the issuance of 68 exploratory permits in the Northwest Territories. Would the Prime Minister advise whether he has inquired as to why his minister is unaware, in respect of such an important matter, of what is going on in his department? In addition, could the Prime Minister advise the House whether the cabinet in the commitment to the Inuit Tapirisat people on February 27 indicated that no further permits would be issued in the Northwest Territories without consultation?

Mrs. Iona Campagnolo (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, these permits are issued in the regular course of action by the department, and it is necessary that a land use permit be given before any further exploration is to take place. If this occurs, there is a 42 day period required for consultation, so the consultation factor did not come into play in this particular action.

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ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

ALLEGATION OF POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN PROSECUTIONS UNDER REGULATIONS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Stuart Leggatt (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, that only answers one part of the question. The other part asked whether there was any commitment at all given. Let me direct my supplementary question to the Minister of the Environment. In evidence before the Berger inquiry by Mr. Douglas Stephen, regional director of Canadian Wildlife Services, he said, and I hope I quote him correctly, that he has not prosecuted some companies under the environmental protection regulations because of the political impact such prosecutions might have. He said to the judge he would put wings and a halo to his minister. I think he was referring to this particular minister. Can the minister advise the House if he has had any discussions with that particular official and whether that evidence indicates government policy in the north?

● (1120)

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I read part of his testimony before the Berger Commission. This is the first time I have heard about that. I have enough halos. I do not need anyone to give me more. I have never asked anyone in the department to look at the political aspect of those problems.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Banish the thought.