

Adjournment Debate

if I can reply to all questions that were asked this evening, but I wish to respond to the hon. member and to recent questions asked in this House concerning the financing of the LRPA, long range patrol aircraft program.

If my memory serves me right, the hon. minister has previously stated that the Department of National Defence has experienced difficulty in financing the initial development and production phases from its approved capital budget, and it has been necessary to examine a variety of alternatives in an effort to find an optimum solution. This has involved specialists in other departments, in financial institutions, and, of course, Lockheed itself. Lockheed's financial situation has made matters much more difficult. I can assure, you, Mr. Speaker, that this has turned out to be a most complex matter indeed.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Embarrassing too.

Mr. Smith (Saint-Jean): There is no question of impropriety, no question of negligence, or of being misled by Lockheed.

Mr. Forrestall: Says who? On whose part?

Mr. Smith (Saint-Jean): The cash flow requirements are quite normal for this type of program.

Recent revelations in Washington have added to the difficulty of the Canadian government in reaching an over-all position on the long range patrol aircraft program; however, the department and the government are hoping to reach a final resolution on this matter by the end of this month.

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE—REASON PRIME MINISTER CAN IGNORE REQUEST FOR PUBLIC INQUIRY

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, for 12 days now this House has been frustrated in its functionings; it had been unable to carry out its business properly and in the normal manner. There has been almost complete expropriation of the question period by a single item. There have been motions for adjournment that have interrupted the normal business. The credibility of parliament is being questioned. On top of that we have had a ministerial resignation followed by a prime ministerial rejection. A few days later we had a second resignation accompanied by a prime ministerial acceptance.

Those involved in these cabinet manoeuvres were involved in the same matter occupying the question period—the problem of the relations between the executive and the judiciary on matters before the courts. This is a matter that should never have arisen. It is most improper that it should have become an issue because it is a fundamental doctrine underlying democratic government, as we know it, that the judiciary shall enjoy complete immunity from executive influence in matters before the courts. The fact that this doctrine has been set aside and improprieties committed—those are Chief Justice Deschênes words—is reason enough for an inquiry.

● (2210)

Confusion has been heaped on confusion, with the reasons given for the two ministerial resignations. One resignation
[Mr. Smith (Saint-Jean).]

nation, not accepted, was tendered by the minister who admitted the impropriety and assumed full responsibility for it. The resignation which was accepted was tendered by the person on whose behalf the other minister acted. But the grounds for the second resignation were, according to the words of the minister concerned, in no way connected with the impropriety committed by the first minister at his behest or, at least, with his knowledge.

Then we learned of new rules and ethics, of the need to channel through the Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford) any representations which must be made on matters before the courts. One way or another, the credibility of parliament has been put in question. It is being eroded. I contend that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) is at fault.

Is it any wonder that the Canadian people are upset and confused about events I have just mentioned? I must indeed ask myself if the Canadian people are not being deliberately confused. I am supported in this approach to the question of why parliament is more or less immobilized at present by considering another couple of red herrings which have been dragged, for no apparent reason, across the picture. Patriation of the constitution is one; criticism of Bill 22 another; the third is the "ganging up" notion, which any in their senses reject out of hand. There is enough confusion in this picture, enough unexplained anomalies, enough inconsistencies between answers given by ministers and the Prime Minister himself, to provide evidence that the confusion is deliberate and could be made clear if the Prime Minister wanted to clarify.

I charge that, with his tactics, the Prime Minister is deliberately holding up the normal procedures of this House. He is doing this by refusing to establish a commission of inquiry. As proof of my charge I suggest that if the Prime Minister were to accede to the perfectly normal request of the opposition and country and establish an independent inquiry into relations between certain cabinet ministers and the judiciary, the House could return without further delay to its normal business.

Why does the Prime Minister hold out so stubbornly? That is the question I asked myself yesterday when I formulated my query. There are two possible explanations. I do not know which one is true, or if they are not interrelated. I suspect, first, that the Prime Minister interprets an election as a mandate to govern without further reference to the electorate.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Consecration by election.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): The government has an absolute majority of seven members; at the moment it may be only six. I believe there is one vacancy on the other side of the House. Being possessed of that majority, the Prime Minister apparently feels he need not respond to popular demand. This is the presidential attitude I deplore and fear. It is an attitude many of my countrymen deplore and fear.

Alternatively, if I am not right, if it is not that, the Prime Minister's attitude stems from the arrogance of power. It is the arrogance of power which allows the Prime Minister to hold up the work of this House. We know about the arrogance of power. That power corrupts we know; we have seen instances of it. And absolute power corrupts