

Inquiries of the Ministry

the government has under consideration at the present time any change in the remuneration of judges?

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Speaker, it seems to linger in my memory that judges are not the only ones who have an interest in changes in their salary or remuneration; I seem to recall a debate on indemnities in this house on the initiative of the hon. member not long ago. I can assure him that the problem he has brought to my attention is receiving the same earnest consideration as the problem he brought to the attention of the house a short time ago.

(Translation):

HOUSE OF COMMONS**BELLECHASSE CONSTITUENCY—REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION**

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Lionel Chevrier (Laurier): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Secretary of State (Mr. Dorion).

Has the minister a statement to make about the request he submitted to the chief electoral officer to investigate the activities of the returning officer in the riding of Bellechasse? Could he tell us in particular on what date he made that request?

Hon. Noel Dorion (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the hon. member for Laurier (Mr. Chevrier) asked me that question. I should like to make the following statement on this matter.

Early in February, I think—I cannot remember the exact date—I had the visit of the man who printed electoral literature in 1958, at the request of the then returning officer, who is the official returning officer, Mr. Labrecque of St. Raphael.

I got in touch immediately with the chief electoral officer to communicate to him the information that gentleman had given me. Right at that time I had asked that an investigation be carried out to determine whether that information was true or not.

The chief electoral officer and I had a discussion. We did not agree on the meaning of subsection 14 of section 17 of the Canada Elections Act.

Later on I communicated three times with the chief electoral officer, Mr. Castonguay, at the end of February, on March 10 and finally on March 22.

As the chief electoral officer required that a formal complaint be made, I took it upon myself, on the basis of the information I had gathered during that time, not to lodge

a formal complaint but to give the chief electoral officer the information that had been provided to me and I earnestly asked him to have an investigation launched immediately by the R.C.M.P.

On March 22, Mr. Castonguay informed me that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police had been advised and that it was to begin forthwith its investigation, which had been given priority over all others.

Now, of course, until the results are known, the chief electoral officer himself, who is responsible for the administration of the act, is unable to come to a conclusion and take the steps which may be required when the results of the investigation are known.

Mr. Azellus Denis (St. Denis): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Secretary of State (Mr. Dorion) a supplementary question in this regard.

If the investigation report has not been submitted, how could he state the next day that the Quebec Conservatives were victims of calumny. Why not just say slander, or why not simply wait for the investigation report?

Mr. Dorion: Who said that?

Mr. Denis: The Secretary of State (Mr. Dorion), in Montmorency, as reported in the March 24 edition of *La Presse*.

An hon. Member: Nothing but gossip.

Mr. Dorion: I never made such a statement in Montmorency. When I left—

Mr. Samuel Boulanger (Drummond-Arthabaska): Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question—

Some hon. Members: Order.

(Text):

Mr. Speaker: Order. It seems to me that the matter under discussion is now taking the form of a debate. It seems to me also that the subject does not relate to the responsibilities of the Secretary of State as minister but rather as member for a constituency. If the hon. member feels that the statement made needs further elucidation I will allow one further supplementary.

(Translation):

[Later:]

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Boulanger: Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Secretary of State another supplementary question.

Since the minister was officially made aware of the whole situation at the latest on February 6, 1962, how can he account for the fact that he decided to take action only at the end of March, after Mr. Labrecque's doings had been made public by the press?