

run, and usually in the short run, put in a very positive context by the British government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Epp: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask another question of the same minister, which is in reference to information from his own department. Mr. St. John-Stevas said:

This question of highest importance since British Parliament could not proceed if matter before Canadian courts.

That is not what the minister has been saying. In view of that British statement is this the reason why the government will not refer to the Supreme Court of our own country the legality of what they are asking another country to do to our Constitution?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacGuigan: Madam Speaker, the judgment of the Court of Appeal in Manitoba given this week indicates that the Government of Canada has no cause to fear any reference to the courts in this matter.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: Read the judgment.

Mr. MacGuigan: Madam Speaker, the reason why we have not decided to make any such reference is, as the Prime Minister has said repeatedly, because this is a political matter. It is not primarily a legal matter.

ACTIONS OF BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER IN CANADA—
REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION AND RESPONSE

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, I preface my question with the observation that there is no doubt in our minds that the British government and the official opposition in Great Britain have taken the correct constitutional position on this matter, namely, that they should not change a comma or a semi-colon of a resolution which comes from the Parliament of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: You are even beginning to sound like a Liberal!

Mr. Broadbent: The Colonel Blimps to my right may take a different colonial position, but that is the position of my party.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: Madam Speaker, my question—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Can we get back to the questions?

Oral Questions

Mr. Broadbent: Madam Speaker, it is obvious that Margaret Thatcher's "presence" in their caucus yesterday caused them a little trouble.

Some hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Broadbent: Quite seriously, I would like to ask the minister, given the responsible position taken by the government of Great Britain and their official opposition, is he aware that the British High Commissioner to Canada has directly attempted to influence Canadian Members of Parliament, and other Canadians, on this important Canadian internal matter?

Some hon. Members: Oh!

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, I have had some reports of that nature.

An hon. Member: What did you do about it?

Mr. MacGuigan: If they were true, I might say that such conduct would, of course, be doing a great disservice to the government of the United Kingdom. It would be conduct completely unacceptable to this government. As the Leader of the New Democratic Party knows, among other incidents reported have been those involving some Members of Parliament including, I think I might say, the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway. I am in the process of investigating these reports and considering what action should be taken, if any.

Mr. Broadbent: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to hear that the minister is investigating this inappropriate activity.

● (1425)

Would the minister tell hon. members at what point the House of Commons may expect a full report on these serious allegations?

Mr. MacGuigan: Madam Speaker, because of the seriousness of the matter I would not, and I am sure that the government would not wish to act precipitously. It will probably take us some days to investigate and to decide on the best course of action.

Mr. Broadbent: Madam Speaker, to be perfectly clear, if the minister finds that the British High Commissioner has in fact attempted to influence members of the House of Commons as well as, I understand, other Canadians, on an essentially internal affair, will he file a protest in the strongest possible terms with the British High Commissioner pointing out that the activity which he has undertaken is in flat contradiction to the commitments which his own government made in Great Britain?

Mr. MacGuigan: Madam Speaker, such conduct, if true, would not indeed represent the policy of the government of the United Kingdom. Certainly the course of action suggested by the hon. member would be one of the alternatives considered.