

Supply—Justice

Upon the assumption of office of the minister after the upset of the Liberal government apparently a new list of acceptable attorneys was made up and Mr. Freeman noted that he was no longer on the list of acceptable attorneys. Therefore he wrote and applied for his name to be placed on the list of attorneys acceptable to the minister's department for legal work in connection with whatever work Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation might have in that area. He applied as early as October 17, 1957, and I have in my hand a copy of the letter sent to Mr. Freeman by Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation dated October 25, 1957, in which they say:

We have for reply yours of October 17.

In selecting legal agents we adhere to a list provided to us by the Department of Justice. Because our discretion is limited to this extent we regret that we cannot initiate action to have your name included on the list of agents who may undertake work for us from time to time.

I hope the minister will explain why his department submits a list to Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation of who or who might not be adequate attorneys to act on their behalf. I believe that an institution such as this—a well established crown corporation—ought to be given the right to determine who should or should not be doing its legal work in various places across the country. It is very obvious from the letter sent to Mr. Freeman on October 5, 1957 that Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation cannot engage a lawyer anywhere in Canada unless such attorney's name is on the list submitted to the corporation by the minister. I fail, in the first instance, to see the need for this procedure in any respect. It is obvious that Mr. Freeman was unable to get his name placed on the list again after the assumption of office by the new minister, and I understand that there has been some correspondence since between Mr. Freeman and the hon. member for Lincoln, representing, I presume, his area. I should like to read into the record a letter which the hon. member for Lincoln has sent to Mr. Freeman. The date of this letter is December 16, 1957, and it says:

Your name has been referred to me for certain reasons of which I think you are aware.

I should like to underline every word of that first sentence. This hon. member said to Mr. Freeman, an applicant to be placed on the list as an attorney eligible to do business on behalf of a crown corporation:

Your name has been referred to me for certain reasons of which I think you are aware.

The letter goes on:

In our way of living one is often asked to approve of someone's abilities to fulfil certain obligations.

66968-9—311

I have no quarrel with that.

You will recall that you undertook to certify against my abilities to assume certain obligations, which you did in a public way.

The only construction I can place on that is that obviously Mr. Freeman was active in the election campaign, and not active in the interests of the hon. member for Lincoln. However, the letter goes on:

Knowing your opinion of me, I am neither for you nor against you.

I should like to compliment the hon. member for Lincoln on that statement. I wish I could say that subsequent actions were able to bear this out.

If you have changed your mind about me, I could change my thoughts about you, also.

This is the crowning glory of it all, Mr. Chairman, since you will recall that this letter was written on December 16. It concludes:

Wishing you and your family the season's greetings.

Mr. Pickersgill: This is the government which abolished patronage, is it?

Mr. Regier: I am very pleased to note that the hon. member for Lincoln holds no grievance against this attorney in St. Catharines because he was, obviously, a Liberal or a supporter of the C.C.F. I do not know what he is; I am taking this up as a matter of principle. However, he was assured that if he would only change his mind about the abilities of the hon. member for Lincoln that might have some effect, and he might be placed again in the good graces of the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation in the roundabout way of receiving the nod from the Minister of Justice.

I have here another letter which worries me a little more in that it involves the integrity of the minister which I had always held to be beyond the shadow of a doubt. On August 30, 1958 the hon. member for Lincoln once again writes a letter to Mr. Freeman, and he opens it in this way.

I have been asked by the Department of Justice to write to you regarding Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation legal work in connection with direct central mortgage and housing loans in Lincoln county.

Now it was our understanding that parliamentary secretaries had not yet been appointed, and we completely fail to appreciate the procedure whereby an hon. member of this house who is not a member of the government but only a supporter of the government is able to write to a person in his constituency in this way, and I hope the minister intends to deal with this particular matter. I have always assumed that the minister was able to deal with his own