

*Privilege—Mr. Gamble*

Mozambique for the harsh and uncivilized treatment accorded Canadian citizens?

The issue which gave rise to that question was important not only to the House but to all Canadians, Madam Speaker. It involved the entry into Mozambique by two Canadians, one of whom was referred to in the question, and an American companion. These people were denied the right to leave that communist-controlled country. When they endeavoured to do so in the usual course of their travels, they were detained by the immigration authorities of Mozambique. They were ultimately imprisoned, having been arrested by the secret police of Mozambique. Both Canadians carried Canadian passports and requested the right and opportunity to consult with and seek the protection of Canadian consular officials. The facts are that while Canada has an ambassador to Mozambique, he resides, as the Secretary of State for External Affairs will know, in Zambia.

Fortunately, between the time of the original detention by the immigration authorities and the time of the arrest by the secret police, one of the three people was able to place a telephone call to the United States consulate in Mozambique. After being imprisoned from December 31 to January 8 in the Mashava prison, a place where one in Canada would not countenance the housing of animals, they were released as a consequence of the activities of both the U.S. consular officials and the consular officials of Great Britain.

Immediately after release they were questioned by Canadian consular staff in Johannesburg. According to the Canadian ambassador to Mozambique he has filed a complete report and an analysis of the occurrences.

I submit this issue concerned the duty and obligation of the government of this country to protect its citizens when travelling abroad, and to see they are granted access to Canadian consular staff abroad. Nations, such as Mozambique, which have denied Canadian citizens travelling to their country the right of that access, should be subject to the stiffest of diplomatic notes of protest which this government can issue. In my submission, instead of that, the government has acted as a spineless coward in failing to respond to this customary need which Canadian citizens travelling outside of Canada should expect from their national government.

The President of the Privy Council responded to my question, found at page 6271 of *Hansard*, as follows:

Madam Speaker, seeing the Secretary of State for External Affairs is absent, I shall take notice of the question of the hon. member and convey his views and suggestions to the Secretary. I shall make sure that the hon. member gets a reply as soon as possible.

I have not as yet received a reply from either the President of the Privy Council, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, or anyone acting for or on their behalf. Imagine my surprise when I read an article in yesterday's *Toronto Star* by Ellie Teshler, who gave an account of having communicated with the Department of External Affairs and of having been advised by the department that no note of protest had in fact been dispatched by the Government of Canada to the government of Mozambique.

Miss Teshler made reference to having spoken to someone in the Department of External Affairs. Of course, not preferring to rely on an article which appeared in a newspaper, I spoke to Miss Teshler. She confirmed the accuracy of the account which appeared in the paper and gave me the name of the official at the Department of External Affairs, whom I contacted. The person in question did not deny the accuracy of the article which I mentioned to her, having first examined and read it in the newspaper.

This question of privilege is not based upon my complaint that the minister of the Crown or any minister of the Crown has not answered a question in the House. I clearly recognize that if that were the substance of my objection and my question of privilege, it would be without foundation. However, it is based upon the failure of a minister of the Crown to honour an undertaking which he gave to me as a member of the House of Commons.

● (1510)

Let me say in fairness that the minister might allege that the time limitation included within the phrase "as soon as possible" has not yet expired. If that is the case, why is it that a newspaper reporter can, by the simple expedient of picking up a telephone, contact the Department of External Affairs and obtain all of the information which is not available to a member of the House of Commons?

The proceedings in this House become a laughing matter if question period gives rise to the simple deferral of issues which are important not to individual members but to the whole conduct of the affairs of this House. I am not alleging that there is a delinquency in failing to respond to a question, but that there is a refusal to commit the completion of an undertaking which has been given by a minister of the Crown to this House and to one of the members thereof.

The House is not well served by a failure of the kind I have described. I submit it is incumbent upon ministers of the Crown to discharge their obligations given in this House, without which the House cannot properly function. I therefore move:

That this matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections for attention.

**Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs):** Madam Speaker, the rather turgid presentation of the hon. member for York North (Mr. Gamble) has certainly not contributed to an understanding of this problem. The reason why he has not got an answer, and the reporter whom he quotes did get an answer, is simply that they were asking different questions. The reporter was asking whether a note of protest has yet been sent. The answer to that is clearly no. The hon. member asked whether such a note will be sent. On that question of whether a note will be sent, we have not yet reached a final decision.

I wish to tell the hon. member and the House that, on the basis of the facts as we possess them at the present time, there is no foundation for any note of protest. The facts are as follows: Miss Amiel and two companions, one of whom is a