

Oral Questions

Mr. Mulroney:—does not enter into the matter. We presume that all the federal judges are going to be as independent and impartial as they have traditionally proven to be.

● (1125)

REQUEST FOR REPLACEMENT OF DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Prime Minister. During his absence on official business the Prime Minister was unable to witness the most blatant example of stonewalling that this House has ever seen, which has caused the image of the Government to be tarnished. In view of this I would like to ask him if he would not undertake to ask the Minister of National Defence to step down as Deputy Prime Minister to be replaced by a more suitable appointee.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): No, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE APPLICATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST GUIDELINES

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister refuses to replace the Deputy Prime Minister, could he at least give the House the assurance that he will remove the responsibility for applying the conflict of interest guidelines from his purview, considering the example given by the Minister in the past two weeks here in the House?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): I think the position I announced in my replies this morning reflects the Government's position, which is entirely appropriate.

[*English*]

JUSTICE'S APPOINTMENT

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, my question arises with respect to the position into which the judge who has been chosen to conduct the Stevens conflict allegations is being put. As a judge who was, in fact, appointed and promoted by Conservatives, as a former Tory riding president, and as a judge who conducted—

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. The Hon. Member knows full well our rules about comments about the judiciary. I am prepared to hear his question, but I must remind him that comments about the judiciary are out of order.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the inquiry report prepared by the judge in question was denounced as a whitewash and a political hatchet job for the Conservative Government of the day, and as a double standard by respected journalists of the day, I want to ask the Prime Minister, in view of those antecedents, does he not recognize he is putting the judge in an impossible position and opening

him to precisely this kind of attack on his political independence?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): He was appointed by Mr. Diefenbaker, promoted by Mr. Trudeau, and he conducts himself, as with all judges, honourably in the conduct of a commission of inquiry. Mr. Justice Tom Berger, as I recollect, formerly of the NDP, was appointed a federal judge and conducted a commission of inquiry, and did so very well with no reference to his political roots.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, Tom Berger was not looking into allegations of misconduct by an NDP colleague.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): In view of the fact that at the time Mr. Justice Parker accepted his previous commission of inquiry he emphasized that he accepted it because he was examining facts, and his findings would have no direct political effect.

Mr. Speaker: Question, please?

Mr. Robinson: Does the Prime Minister not recognize that this commission of inquiry is fundamentally different, and the Prime Minister has no business asking a judge to embark on an inquiry of this nature, which is properly conducted by the Parliament of Canada?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): The terms of reference are clear, and they are, I think, very adequate, and will allow the Chief Justice to conduct the kind of inquiry that is required.

STATEMENT MADE BY PRIME MINISTER

Hon. Douglas C. Frith (Sudbury): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. Upon the Prime Minister's return to Canada he said that the Conservatives are erecting a new standard of morality day by day in Canada. The manner in which the Deputy Prime Minister stonewalled this Parliament for two weeks refusing to answer legitimate questions of the Opposition with respect to the Stevens' affair—does that represent his concept of a new morality in this country?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): I was referring to a ministerial resignation pursuant to the British parliamentary practice where we have differed sharply from the previous Liberal Government which insisted on a resignation only when a Minister was close to being indicted.

● (1130)

INQUIRY CONCERNING FORMER MINISTERS

Hon. Douglas C. Frith (Sudbury): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Prime Minister. Would he kindly name the former Liberal Ministers to whom he referred in that response?