

Oral Questions

● (1120)

REPRESENTATIONS TO UNITED STATES AUTHORITIES

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel): Madam Speaker, I can assure the Prime Minister that I, for one, and the official opposition in general, feel that this is a serious matter.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Prime Minister, would you indicate if—

Some hon. Members: Order, order.

Mr. Stevens:—if a state document brought out on March 21, 1978, by the justice department in the United States is correct in stating that the Canadian government had interceded and asked that certain felony charges not be laid against Gulf Oil Corporation, an American company, and eight other companies with respect to the uranium cartel, many of which are already included in the report which is now in the hands of the Attorney General of Canada? If, in fact, you did intercede, how come you interceded—

Some hon. Members: Order, order.

An hon. Member: Address the Chair!

Mr. Stevens:—in American affairs when it then suited your purpose? In turn, how can we, Madam Speaker, have any assurance that if you sought to intercede in the American—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Stevens:—position, that we will have an independent adjudication with respect to the laying of possible charges in Canada—

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr. Stevens:—against the self-same corporations?

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Hear, hear!

Madam Speaker: I was just calling the hon. member to order. I think he is an old enough member in this House to know that he must address the Chair. I am a bit lenient with younger members, new members, rather, when they say “you”, rather than “the hon. member”. That is why I was calling the hon. member back to order.

Mr. Stevens: Well, Madam Speaker—

An hon. Member: Order. You've got to be recognized.

Mr. Stevens: I believe the Prime Minister heard the thrust of my question. Perhaps he can answer why his government did, in fact, intercede in the American proceedings to stop felony charges being laid at that time against the very companies which may be included in the report that Mr. Bertrand has submitted to the Attorney General of Canada for possible charges to be laid in Canada.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I cannot comment on that particular fact. I have no recollection of it. But I do recall that our government did intervene in the United States. We talked, and in particular I believe it was then the minister of justice of Canada who appealed to the Attorney General of the United States—I believe it was Mr. Clark at the time—suggesting that these matters should be dealt with by international comity rather than by taking Canadians to the courts under American laws in the United States.

If there is an American company involved in the question of the hon. member, I do not know the facts about that. I would imagine that it had to do with a subsidiary of Gulf operating in Canada under Canadian law. Certainly it was not our intention to protect Americans from the laws of their own government. However, the hon. member knows that there are some subsidiaries of American companies operating in Canada. We intend that they operate under Canadian law, not under American law.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

QUERY RESPECTING COMPENSATION FOR URANIUM FIRMS

Mr. Chris Speyer (Cambridge): Madam Speaker, my question is also for the Prime Minister. I would like to ask the Prime Minister whether he or any other cabinet minister or member of the government has received any demand, or any request, from any of the uranium firms which have settled their anti-trust suits in the United States, for compensation, on the basis that they were coerced into joining the cartel, and suffered extensive millions of dollars in damages by way of settlement.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I know of no such demand. I repeat that the—

Mr. Stevens: Better check your file.

Mr. Trudeau:—international trading agreement was set up by agreement between Canada and half a dozen other countries of Europe and other parts of the world. It was done in order to protect the Canadian companies, Canadian producers and Canadian workers, against restrictive actions taken by the United States government to protect its own markets. It was a defensive action. It is perfectly justifiable, and we will hold that to the very end.

I do not believe the hon. members opposite have actually gone on the record as saying that at that time we should have let the Canadian companies go under because the Americans were protecting their markets contrary to the rules of GATT and of many other rules. I wish they would make their position quite clear on that. Do they think we were unjustified in protecting the Canadian uranium producers, as France, Britain, South Africa and half a dozen other countries were protecting their producers, against United States action? Is the hon. member suggesting that Canada alone should not have protected its producers?