

Oral Questions

[Translation]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION—
FRANCE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. May I draw the attention of the House of Commons to the presence in the gallery of a parliamentary delegation from the National Assembly of France.

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[English]

PENITENTIARIES

ARCHAMBAULT INSTITUTION—AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S
CALL FOR INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Solicitor General. The report issued yesterday by Amnesty International showing that there are reasonable grounds to believe that prison inmates in Archambault had tear gas sprayed into their mouths, were burned on their flesh with lighted cigarettes, were severely beaten, and were the victims of water torture, surely represents the kind of activity which is condoned in repressive banana republics and not here in Canada.

Given the fact that the Amnesty International report calls for a full, independent, impartial inquiry, not a perceived whitewash by a government employee, paid by the Government of Canada, reporting to the Solicitor General directly, when will the Minister finally live up to his obligations and accept this essential recommendation of Amnesty International and order a full, public, judicial inquiry into these shocking allegations?

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the qualifications of a public inquiry and a judicial inquiry do not appear in the Amnesty International recommendations. They were omitted. What appears here is a "full, independent, and impartial investigation".

Mr. Nielsen: How can the investigator be independent?

Mr. Kaplan: This House knows well the mandate of the correctional investigator. He was established pursuant to a recommendation of a parliamentary committee, and it was a unanimous recommendation of all Parties that that individual be given those authorities. He was given those authorities. He is exercising those authorities. The Hon. Member is criticizing the report and undermining it before it is even written.

I have undertaken to make that report public as soon as I get it. I will honour that commitment and make the report public when I get it. I think if the Member is wanting now to lay a foundation for attacking the credibility of the report, he should at least, in fairness to the correctional investigator, wait to see it.

Mr. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, if the Minister fails to act on this unprecedented Amnesty report, he will certainly

bring international shame to Canada, and in particular to his Government.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, considering the outright rejection of the response to those very serious accusations, why did the Minister refuse to make a clear and unequivocal statement, as recommended by Amnesty International, against any kind of torture and inhuman treatment in prisons throughout Canada?

Mr. Kaplan: Mr. Speaker, it is because, in that respect, our laws, our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the guidelines issued by the Commissioner of the Correctional Service are already clear enough to warn Canadians and establish the position of the Government and Canadians against this kind of behaviour. There is no need to tell a group of professionals such as correctional officers in our institutions that they must not resort to torture.

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CANADA POST CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR DETAILS REGARDING RETAIL OUTLETS

Mr. Henri Tousignant (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister responsible for the Canada Post Corporation. Could he tell the House just what the intentions of the Canada Post Corporation are with respect to its grand project to turn itself into retail outlets, thus competing unfairly with small businesses and merchants that must keep inventories? In addition, could the Minister tell us as well whether Canada Post has given him the names of the shareholders of that company, which I refrain from naming to avoid publicity, but which is now on a honeymoon with the Canada Post Corporation?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Labour): Obviously, Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is mistaken if he thinks that the Canada Post Corporation has become retail outlets. The fact is that Canada Post is responsible for delivering both letters and parcels, and the project mentioned by the Hon. Member is a pilot project launched in a few regions of Canada to give better service to the clients of certain companies. That is part of the general responsibilities of Canada Post to deliver mail rapidly.

However, I can tell the Hon. Member that, as a result of representations made by him and some of his colleagues on the Government benches, the President of the Canada Post Corporation has assured me that he would reconsider the question and discuss with Canada Post customers the best way to correct the situation.