

Search and Rescue Services

Mr. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for St. John's East is justifiably excited about this particular issue. However, that should not mean and must not mean that I will feel obligated to give the House his version of the facts. The facts are tragic enough without our having to bicker about them.

For the deliberation of the House, Mr. Speaker, let me present a few facts which relate to the hon. gentleman from St. John's East, since he wants to be the focus of the debate. He is known by every living soul in Newfoundland. There can be no person in Newfoundland who does not know exactly where the Hon. Member for St. John's East stands on search and rescue. To his credit, every living Newfoundlander knows where he stand on this subject. To their credit as Newfoundlanders, they also know where he stood when he was in a position to do something about it. That is the acid test, Mr. Speaker. The test is not how loudly he can shout, how incriminating he can become, how much he can impute the other fellow's motives and alleged ignorance of the facts, but it is what he does about the facts when he, the Hon. Member for St. John's East, is in a position to do something about them.

When would he have been in a position to do something about those facts, Mr. Speaker? How about the period from June, 1979 to March, 1980, when he was a member of the Cabinet of the Government of Canada? During that period, he never lifted one finger to improve the search and rescue capability on the East Coast of Canada. He talked long and hard. He throws allegations across the House. He stands with an attitude that is holier than thou. But given nine months to do something about the problem, he was too busy doing other things.

Mr. Taylor: You've had ten long years.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Simmons: Oh, they do not like that! I have upset them.

Mr. Taylor: You've had ten years, what have you done?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order. Does the Hon. Member rise on a point of order?

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, may I rise on a point of order to correct the record? The Hon. Member is misleading the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): I would invite Hon. Members first to observe the normal rules of debate, which require as a matter of courtesy that the Member who has the floor be allowed to speak uninterrupted. I appreciate that perhaps the Hon. Member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) may want to seek redress as a consequence of certain remarks made by the Hon. Member for Burin-St. George's (Mr. Simmons), but that could well fall under the category of debate. In any case, I will give the Hon. Member the benefit of the doubt and hear him out for a moment or two.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman was not in the Cabinet long enough to determine what the facts were. He was only there for ten days.

During our brief period in office, we commissioned an interdepartmental study into certain—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, order. That is debate. The Hon. Member for St. John's East is an experienced Member of Parliament and I invite him to cooperate with the Chair.

Mr. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, I did not particularly want to raise the blood pressure of Hon. Members of the Conservative Party this late in the day. I just wanted to present to the House some facts. They may not be facts that are pleasant to the ears of the Hon. Member for St. John's East, but as he has confirmed himself in the last few moments, they are facts. His response to my comment is that they did another study. His response is to get abusive and personal.

An Hon. Member: Oh, listen to that.

Mr. Simmons: I will be the first to admit to the Chamber that I now have something in common with the Hon. Member for St. John's East and with several other Members on his side of the House. I admit, as he reminds me, that I was not in Cabinet for a very long time. I admit that I have something in common with Tories in the country because we all went through Cabinet on a conveyor belt. I admit that, but that does not allow him the privilege of hiding behind his short time in Cabinet. His time in Cabinet was not ten days, it was ten months.

Mr. Taylor: Yours was ten years.

Mr. Simmons: What does he do? He waves a report of another interdepartmental study.

Mr. Taylor: You've been there for years.

Mr. Simmons: The Hon. Member for Bow River (Mr. Taylor) has come briefly awake, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Taylor: Tell us what you've done in ten years.

Mr. McGrath: What have you done since 1979? You have been in the House since 1979. What have you done? Tell us what the Government has done since 1979 to improve search and rescue in Newfoundland? Tell us.

An Hon. Member: Nothing. They are incapable of doing anything.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, please. The Chair seeks the co-operation of all Hon. Members to respect the right of the Hon. Member for Burin-St. George's.

An Hon. Member: He is not even sitting down properly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Hon. Members should not interrupt the Chair. I am trying to get the House to