

PROVISION OF LEGAL COUNSEL FOR OFFICIALS NAMED IN
BERTRAND REPORT

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is also directed to the Minister of Justice. It relates to the uranium cartel. There is a widespread belief across the country that the Attorney General, in the terms of laying his charges, is in effect hanging out public servants to dry, so to speak, and not possibly fulfilling his responsibility of having joined or named as unindicted co-conspirators other people who had positions of political responsibility. In the interests of determining exactly where the government stands with respect to these public servants who were in the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, reporting to a deputy minister and to a minister who is no longer with us, does the government intend to engage counsel on behalf of Mr. MacNabb and Mr. Runnalls for the purpose of the hearings and of the information and the charges which were laid against the alleged conspirators in the cartel case? Will the government be providing counsel for these people?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development): Madam Speaker, I have not received any such request, but Mr. MacNabb and Mr. Runnalls have not been accused. They are not accused. I do not know whether they need some legal advice. I have not received any request from them. They have been named as unindicted co-conspirators, a technique which has been used in three different cases before. This is the first time that there are public servants in that position. I want to repeat that they are not accused. If they are requesting some legal advice of me—and I have not received any such request—I will certainly study the case.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACTIONS OF DEPARTMENTAL OFFICIALS

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West): Madam Speaker, I am sure that the people who are named in this particular information will take very little comfort from the position taken by the Minister of Justice. In other words, he is not quite sure what he will do with respect to providing counsel. This only goes to underline the fact that they are being hung out to dry.

With respect to the Bertrand report, the minister will know with his legal training that it is one of the items in which demand for particulars could be obtained in the criminal proceedings. In fact the prospect is that the report could be public in the course of these proceedings. Why does the minister not allow the Bertrand report to be made public? Why does he continue to keep this matter under wraps? Why does he insist, for example, on not having the matter reviewed by the attorneys general of the provinces, independent of counsel who helped prepare the report and who naturally will have a particular interest with respect to the kinds of charges which are laid?

Oral Questions

● (1125)

There is a principle here of ministerial responsibility, which the minister does not understand, traditional to our parliamentary system. The minister must take responsibility for the acts of public servants. What is the minister's position with respect to—

Mr. Lalonde: What about the rights of the defendants?

Mr. Hnatyshyn:—Messrs. MacNabb and Runnalls? Did they act without the authority of the government, or is it the position of the government that they acted with authority?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development): I will have a little bit of a problem in replying to all those statements, but I would like to say that I have been discharging my responsibility as Attorney General. It is a quasi judicial capacity, as was stated by Senator Flynn when he appeared in front of the committee at the time the other side was forming a government. In the matter of transportation, when there was some argument about consultation with ministers and so on, he took full responsibility, as I am doing.

The Bertrand report is the documentation that will be used by the prosecutors in court in terms of evidence. At that time, according to the inquiry lawyers, they will use some elements of that material to make sure they win their case against the six corporations indicted. I do not want to jeopardize the position of the prosecutors in that case. That is their case, they will handle it in the courts. Some or all of it will be in front of the courts; but it is their case. It is like any other report from the police or reports in other cases of a similar nature in the past. These reports are for the Crown to use in their prosecution, and I will keep it that way.

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POST OFFICE

POSTAL STRIKE—COMPOSITION OF GOVERNMENT
NEGOTIATING TEAM

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the President of the Treasury Board. As the whole country knows, on Monday we will have experienced two weeks of a postal strike which has been a great inconvenience to the country, has meant a great financial loss particularly to small businessmen, and most of all has adversely affected the workers involved because they experience a total loss of income.

Since the striking workers have made a significant conciliatory gesture by stating they would go back to the bargaining table right away if the government has Mr. Michael Warren join its negotiating team—that is the only condition now—I ask the minister is the government prepared today, as an important step to getting the postal service running again, to agree to that request?