

[Translation]

REQUEST THAT MINISTER MAKE STATEMENT

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a supplementary question to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General. Perhaps the Attorney General was simply kidding about this matter yesterday afternoon in the House? Perhaps he might make a full statement on the circumstances related to the fact that the prosecution has been stayed or ended.

[English]

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the hon. gentleman finally got around to asking me about this question because, if you want an answer, you have to go to the horse's mouth. Mr. Speaker—

An Hon. Member: What does that make the Prime Minister?

Mr. Axworthy: We went to the other end this time.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Crosbie: In this case, Mr. Speaker, the other end of the horse asked the question.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker, as Attorney General I made a decision that certain prosecutions would have to be stayed because I was advised that the Government was reconsidering its policy in the area of communications and in this area.

Ms. Copps: Who advised you?

Mr. Crosbie: I was advised by the Government that it was changing its policy—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Crosbie: —and the Minister—what a bunch of juveniles.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crosbie: I was advised by the Minister of Communications that the Government had agreed with him to review the policy in this case, and it did not seem fair to me to go ahead and prosecute these eight or nine satellite operations in view of the fact that the policy might well be changed in the very near future. That is why the prosecutions are stayed. If there is no change in policy, the prosecutions will be going ahead again.

● (1420)

MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, in view of the assurances which the Prime Minister has just given that he

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did not give direction, which assurances we must accept, I would like to ask the Minister to look at the answer he gave yesterday, which is to the contrary. He said he does accept direction from the Prime Minister in the exercise of his prosecutorial discretion. Would he agree that statements like that bring the administration of justice into disrepute?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I did not say yesterday that I accepted any directions from the Prime Minister, or anyone else, in connection with my duties as Attorney General. If the hon. gentleman got that impression, may I straighten him out today. I do not accept directions from anyone with respect to my duties as Attorney General. I seek advice. I will get the advice of my officials. I will hear representations, and if any Member of the House wants to make a representation to me I will take that representation for whatever it is worth. That is how I intend to proceed. I have never been dictated to by anyone in my life, and I do not intend to start now.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kaplan: Mr. Speaker, I gather the Attorney General of Canada has had a pretty interesting evening between giving yesterday's answers and today's.

ROLE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer to a statement which the Minister made yesterday which he must also correct. He said that he is a legal agent for a Department that has brought to his attention the violation of a federal statute. Would the Minister confirm that he is not in a client-legal agent relationship, but that he is in fact the chief law officer of the Crown when it is brought to his attention that a federal statute has been violated? Would he confirm that his prosecutorial authority applies to his behaviour and to the conduct of that proceeding, and that he is not just some mouthpiece or law office acting for a Department? He was wrong about that yesterday as well.

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman has even asked for my resignation. I did not realize that I had committed such serious offences. However, if I ever do resign, or am asked to resign, I certainly am not going to cry about it, nor stir up any interest group to come to my protection.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crosbie: It all depends on the particular case involved. As Attorney General I am responsible for seeing that the laws of Canada are administered properly and obeyed. I also look upon it as a solicitor-client relationship with certain Departments and agencies when they ask the Government to ask for them. In certain cases we act as an agent. We act as an agent for the CRTC or for other government bodies. I am always willing to accept the advice and suggestions of the official critic opposite.