

Adjournment Debate

We want to see the Fraser River cleaned up in British Columbia. We want to see a government that is truly committed to environmental protection for all parts of Canada.

Mr. Charles A. Langlois (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, first let me assure the hon. member that this government is concerned with issues affecting the environment. As the member is no doubt aware, various actions have been announced to ensure that appropriate steps are put in place to address these concerns.

Insofar as this issue is concerned, the soils that are planned to be removed from the Expo '86 site have been closely examined and analysed to determine if they are a threat to the environment.

The member may be aware also that local concerns resulted in the city of Richmond putting in place a by-law which has strict guidelines for the movement of soils. The Fraser River Harbour Commission is respecting this by-law and the movement of soil has stopped while the province and the city continue their discussion and analysis of the soil.

I would like to stress that the comments made by the member for New Westminster—Burnaby are most unfair and that she certainly realizes that this government has been the first federal government to commit so large an amount of money and to take so many important steps with concern to environmental issues.

IMMIGRATION

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to object most strenuously to the answer put forward by the Acting Prime Minister in the responses last week to questions on the Al-Mashat affair.

Most specifically, the former Secretary of State for External Affairs has failed to meet his obligation as a minister in accepting ministerial responsibility. He has deliberately put on the record misstatements of facts and falsehoods that should not be allowed to stand. On several occasions in this House up to and including today the former Secretary of State for External affairs, the former Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, was given the chance to apologize to the people of Canada and in particular to a civil servant whom he maligned in the name of Raymond Chrétien.

We heard last week the minister refuse to take any personal responsibility for actions of his office, but we now know as a result of revelations in the Al-Mashat affair that his Chief of Staff had in his hand the memo which specifically laid out the the political difficulties inherent in the Al-Mashat case and they were ignored by the minister.

For the minister to finger a public servant, as he has done in this case, is reprehensible and given the future work of the former minister, since he is now charged with the constitutional dossier, it is important that he personally take this opportunity to clear the air and correct the record.

We heard him say in the House today that if Mr. Chrétien wants an apology he should ask him for it.

• (1800)

I would like to say to the minister that in fact the apology he owes is not only to a civil servant whom he has wrongfully fingered but also to the people of Canada. The false documentation and the false statements were put on the record here in the House, and they were also put on the record in the public domain for millions of Canadians.

[*Translation*]

The crux of the matter is this, Mr. Speaker: Can the minister be trusted by Canadians in constitutional affairs, when he can't even tell the truth in a matter as important as the Al-Mashat affair?

An hon. member: Will you say that outside?

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asked whether I would say that outside. Of course I will say outside what I say inside, unlike the minister, who today repeatedly and adamantly refused to apologize to Raymond Chrétien and to all Canadians. He refused to apologize. He claimed that he had already talked about the matter, and he refused to provide any details, when he knows perfectly well that according to testimony about the Al-Mashat affair, he didn't even talk to Mr. Chrétien. How could Mr. Chrétien have apologized—as the minister claimed he did—when he didn't even talk to him since the beginning of this affair?

He claims this is only a matter concerning a public servant, a private matter between Mr. Clark and Mr. Chrétien, but it is not. He told Canadians here on the floor of the House that Mr. Chrétien had offered his apologies and that he was to blame in this matter.