

Oral Questions

On Friday, September 27, both the New Democratic Party House Leader, the Opposition House Leader, and the Prime Minister himself, during his press conference which was televised live, indicated to Canadians that they wanted to have a Commons committee investigate the CCB bank failure. What changed in either the House Leader's thinking or the Prime Minister's thinking between Friday morning and this morning to result in the Government's announced intention of scrapping the Commons committee?

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, there was no change of thinking on our part. The change of thinking was on the part of the Opposition.

Mr. Tobin: The House Leader will know that Canadians saw the Prime Minister indicate that he wanted that committee to work. He said it Friday morning.

APPOINTMENT OF MR. JUSTICE ESTEY

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber-Port au Port-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, my question concerns bargaining in good faith. When did the Government first approach Justice Estey and ask him to undertake this Royal commission, because you were negotiating with two House Leaders until Friday afternoon?

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the Hon. Member made reference to "bargain in good faith". "Bargain in good faith" means that there is a sense of confidentiality in House Leaders' meetings where we discuss matters proceeding before the House from time to time. That is my idea of a fair method of negotiation.

I do not negotiate in the media. I have always made a point of respecting the confidentiality of House Leaders opposite and I will continue to do so until it is proven to me that that is not the appropriate way to operate on the basis of actions on the part of the Opposition.

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TRADE

CANADA-UNITED STATES NEGOTIATIONS—CANADIAN CULTURAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex-Windsor): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Despite the Prime Minister's promise last week that our cultural identity was not on the table, the United States Ambassador said yesterday: "I would like to see a discussion between the U.S. and Canada... of what has come to be known as the cultural area... to include broadcasting, book publishing, magazines, cable television, movies, et cetera".

Will the Minister take this opportunity to tell the United States quite explicitly that we will not put Canada's cultural industries on the table and that we will not negotiate these crucial elements of our national independence?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has already made it very clear that Canada's cultural identity is not negotiable. I am proud to repeat that assurance.

Mr. Langdon: Of course, the point is to find out whether cultural identity means cultural industries.

BOOK PUBLISHING INDUSTRY

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex-Windsor): Mr. Speaker, will the Minister give a specific commitment, in view of last week's sale of Classic Books and in view of Commerce Secretary Baldrige's recent pressure, that the Government will stick to its Canadian control policy with respect to the book publishing and book distributing industry specifically?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, this is the Party that brought to Canada the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. This is the Party that had the courage, after 16 years of indolence by the Liberals, to declare Canadian sovereignty in Canada's North. This is a Party that will maintain the strength and vitality of Canada's culture and identity. We are so confident of our culture that we are not afraid of seeking commercial arrangements that will provide jobs and security for Canadians.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): If some of my colleagues opposite had been around at the time, their caution would have been such that they would not have let Christopher Columbus get in the boat.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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BANKS AND BANKING

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY—APPOINTMENT OF MR. JUSTICE ESTEY

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Government House Leader. In order to refresh his memory, let me quote a statement repeated by the Prime Minister in a news conference on Friday when he said that he desired to have a Commons committee investigate the Canadian Commercial Bank September 1 collapse. He said:

It must be investigated and those responsible must be held accountable.

When did the Government, the Prime Minister or the House Leader first approach Justice Estey about his taking over the commission which should have been conducted here in the House of Commons? When did he in fact contact Justice Estey?

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I have not spoken to Mr. Justice Estey for some