

Oral Questions

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Anne-Marie Doyle may be gone from the Somalia inquiry but a serious unanswered question remains about how she ended up on the panel in the first place.

The Minister of National Defence has told the House that he personally named Ms. Doyle to the panel after reviewing the résumés of potential commissioners. Therefore, he should have no trouble in answering my question.

Who put Anne-Marie Doyle's name on the minister's list of potential commissioners?

Hon. David M. Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had occasion to review the transcript of *Hansard* and this question was put yesterday. I felt that I had answered it to the best of my ability. Perhaps I was not explicit enough for the hon. member for Calgary Southwest. I will attempt to clarify the situation so that he is satisfied.

I said yesterday that the name of Anne-Marie Doyle had come to my attention as someone who had served with great distinction at the OECD. It was I who put her name forward. I felt that she was a good choice.

Before I gave that answer, the hon. member asked if I could assure the House that the former deputy minister, Bob Fowler, had nothing to do with framing the terms of reference of the inquiry and played no role whatsoever in proposing the name of Anne-Marie Doyle as a possible panel member. I answered those questions but perhaps not clearly enough for the hon. member. In both cases the answer is no.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister just said that this name was brought to his attention.

My question is, who brought this potential commissioner's name to your attention?

The Speaker: Colleagues, I would remind you please always to address questions to the Chair rather than directly to one another and your answers the same way.

• (1425)

Hon. David M. Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I said yesterday and I say again today, quoting from *Hansard*: "The name of Anne-Marie Doyle had come to my attention as someone who had served with great distinction at the OECD".

As ministers, we are aware of many distinguished public servants working for the government now and also past public servants. I thought it would be good for the composition of the inquiry to have someone from the bench as the chair; someone

from the field of journalism who was retired but who had some credibility as a member, and also someone who knew the workings of the government but specifically how foreign policy and defence policy were discharged by the government. I started looking at those kinds of people within the public service as well as former public servants.

I knew of Ms. Doyle's previous involvement in the Privy Council office as someone who had that particular dossier. When I asked for greater details about her career, it became obvious that she was someone of outstanding reputation who could discharge that position.

Had she continued to serve, I believe she would have discharged her obligations fully to the best of her abilities and as a credit to the commission.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister's refusal to answer the question undermines confidence in the inquiry.

Yesterday the minister also stated that the Judge Advocate General helped him to draft the terms of reference of the Somali inquiry.

As the minister knows, the Judge Advocate General works with, and some would say for, the chief of defence staff and the deputy minister of defence. In effect the Judge Advocate General is part of the same military hierarchy that the inquiry is to investigate.

How big a hand has the national defence hierarchy had in drafting the terms of reference of the Somali inquiry? How can Canadians be assured that this involvement has not already prejudiced the inquiry?

Hon. David M. Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Calgary Southwest displays a profound ignorance of the National Defence Act.

First, the Judge Advocate General is appointed by the Prime Minister of Canada. It is an order in council appointment because that person must be independent in the advice he or she gives to ministers. That person is the chief legal officer in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Under the terms of the National Defence Act that person reports on a day to day basis to the Minister of National Defence. It was quite appropriate for me in the course of the last year to discuss aspects of the Somalia case with the Judge Advocate General, as his role under the National Defence Act explicitly says that he should be the one giving legal advice to the minister.

I verified certain aspects with the Judge Advocate General this morning because I wanted to make sure that anything I say on the floor of the House of Commons is absolutely and totally the truth. The government has the interests of all Canadians in mind in getting to the bottom of the events in Somalia in 1993.