

al whether there were any activities or events in the past which might prevent him from carrying out his responsibilities in that very sensitive position?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I answered that question in general terms, because it was asked in general terms, about two weeks ago. The Leader of the Opposition asked me what procedure I followed before appointing people to the cabinet. I told him the kind of clearance I ask for. The answer is the same in this case.

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, it was the very general nature of the response earlier that caused me to raise the question again. The Prime Minister said earlier that he usually asks questions of this kind. I would like to know whether, first in the case of the present Solicitor General and, second, in the case of the former solicitor general, the Prime Minister asked these two people, prior to their appointment, whether there was anything in their background, or any activity that might render them unfit or unable to carry out the position of Solicitor General.

It is a specific question relating, first, to the present Solicitor General and, second, to the previous solicitor general. What was the standard of questioning and care exercised by the Prime Minister, personally, in each of these cases? Did he ask that question of each of them?

● (1502)

Mr. Trudeau: I repeat, if the Leader of the Opposition refers to my earlier answer, I indicated that I always ask the security services of the RCMP to inform me of anything which might be negative in the file of any individual I am considering appointing to cabinet. That is the first step. The second step is that I am satisfied that the lady or gentleman I appoint to cabinet will be able to exercise that role honourably.

Mr. Clark: We know what the general procedure is; we know that in this case the screening authority did its job. We want to know whether the Prime Minister did his own job; whether he, personally, put to those two ministers, before their appointment, the question whether there was anything in their backgrounds which might prevent them carrying out their duties. In the case of the previous solicitor general, did the Prime Minister ask that question, personally? In the case of the present Solicitor General, did the Prime Minister ask that question, personally?

Mr. Trudeau: I have told the Leader of the Opposition that I always satisfy myself that the members appointed would serve in that office with honour and distinction, and I am satisfied that they have.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: This is a very important matter relating to the standards of the government. We in the House of Commons have a right to know what action the Prime Minister took. He said he satisfied himself. I want to know whether the Prime Minister, personally and specifically, asked the present Solicitor General or the previous solicitor general whether there was

Espionage

anything in their backgrounds which might prevent them carrying out the responsibilities of this sensitive portfolio. Did the Prime Minister ask that question, specifically, in one or both those cases?

Mr. Trudeau: It seems to me the essence of my answer is that I am satisfied when I appoint a person to the cabinet. The process by which I satisfy myself, the reasons for which I reach my conclusion, the questions I ask and the answers I receive, are none of the hon. member's business.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Shame!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

TRADE

TABLING OF REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC BOYCOTTS

Hon. Jack H. Horner (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 41 I wish to table, in both official languages, the first semi-annual report of the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce on international economic boycotts.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

EXPULSION OF SOVIET UNION DIPLOMATS AND EMBASSY EMPLOYEES—ATTEMPT TO BREACH NATIONAL SECURITY

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, at noon today, on my instructions, the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs requested the Ambassador of the Soviet Union to withdraw 11 Soviet nationals from Canada for engaging in inadmissible activities in violation of the Official Secrets Act, and of course of their status in Canada. Two other Soviet nationals who were involved have already departed Canada but will not be permitted to return. A strong protest has been conveyed to the Soviet authorities about these activities.

The Soviet Ambassador was informed that the Canadian government had irrefutable evidence that all 13 persons had been involved in an attempt to recruit a member of the RCMP in order to penetrate the RCMP Security Service. Nine of the Soviet nationals still in Canada are employees of the Soviet embassy, one is an official of the Soviet Trade Office in Ottawa, and one is a member of the International Civil Aviation Organization Secretariat in Montreal.

[Translation]

The Canadian authorities have informed the Ambassador of the Soviet Union today of the discovery of an attempt by the