

● (1425)

Mr. Leggatt: Mr. Speaker, the minister should have been perfectly aware that the refusal to attend that conference was a clear indication the provinces would have nothing to do with her scheme, and yet she proceeded to squander public money. Those are the facts.

My question is this. Given the admitted loss that has been confirmed of \$8 million at the federal level, has the minister recommended, or is she recommending to cabinet that there be a specific reference to the Auditor General so that he can have a clear, intensive investigation into where this public money has been squandered and why it is so much?

Mrs. Campagnolo: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. member realizes that only one province refused to attend the conference and the other nine provinces were in favour of attending the conference in September of 1977—

An hon. Member: Order.

Mr. Fraser: Did you waste the money, or did you not?

Mrs. Campagnolo:—which I think would have made it possible for this to go ahead.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Campagnolo: I beg your pardon, Mr. Speaker; I do hope that I have the floor for a few moments to answer the question.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Campagnolo: Obviously, the hon. member for New Westminster is concerned that this amount of money has been invested to retain Loto Canada. He seems to believe it should have been given over to the provinces. It was not; it has been shared. The province of Ontario and the province of Quebec are partners with us in this, and the other provinces in this country do not have any competition in the \$1 lottery, which is part of the agreement.

Mr. Leggatt: Mr. Speaker, the minister should also be aware that her scheme is drying up numerous private lottery, charitable schemes in the country.

My final supplementary question is this. Perhaps the minister could be specific in terms of the waste in the city of Vancouver of the \$160,000 lease for the useless office space in Vancouver and the \$300,000 for mothballed furniture. Has that now been marketed, or is it still sitting there as an albatross around the neck of the taxpayers in downtown Vancouver?

Mrs. Campagnolo: Mr. Speaker, the facts are all contained in the report that I will table today. I am sure the hon. member will be pleased to know that all those matters have been dealt with and are successfully settled.

Oral Questions

I do wish, Mr. Speaker, that he would not fight his campaign for the British Columbia election on the floor of this House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: Shame on you.

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[*Translation*]

CRIMINAL CODE

REQUEST FOR DECRIMINALIZING OF POSSESSION OF MARIJUANA—MINISTER'S DISCUSSIONS WITH CERTAIN MEMBERS

Mr. Léonel Beaudoin (Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Minister of Justice. This morning I read an article in an English newspaper which said that I had prevented the minister from introducing a bill decriminalizing the possession of marijuana, a bill which would have changed the approach taken about this drug in the Criminal Code. Could the minister tell us whether he meant that all of a sudden I was influential enough to stop him or whether he was trying to convince the media that I should have voted for a bill I had not even read?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Justice): The hon. member will recall that in a conversation with him, I asked him if his party would be willing to support an amendment to the Criminal Code which would have the effect of reducing the penalties for possession of marijuana and more particularly of eliminating criminal records for that offence. The hon. member will recall he indicated then that his party preferred to keep the law as is it now without changing it. Therefore, when journalists asked me about that, I told them that unfortunately there was not general agreement in the House to proceed expeditiously with the consideration of amendments which could have been proposed. I think that I reflected very accurately the conversation I had with the hon. member and, as I see his colleagues nodding, I think that is indeed the policy of his party.

Mr. Beaudoin: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. I am somewhat distressed by the fact that we have not had the opportunity to look into the amendments the minister has been advocating and I suggest we should have had the opportunity to do so before coming to a decision. If he means that they wanted to maintain criminal files on all young people involved in drug taking, I think it would have been possible to demonstrate some open-mindedness. On the other hand, I resent the fact that newspaper articles do not reflect the discussion.