

Mr. Clark: That sort of request was, of course, going to be rejected. I want to know why the Solicitor General attaches "Top Secret" to information which is surely important for the House of Commons and the country to know, namely, whether this document which his colleagues claim was very tightly circulated was, in fact, circulated in some number. He told us he will not confirm or deny that fact. Consequently, we must accept that it is confirmed. Will he tell us why he refuses either categorically to confirm or categorically to deny reports that that document was circulated in some number?

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear the hon. member's explanation. It took him more than a week to compile that particular justification. With regard to the reply, should I give it, replies are motivated by parliamentary tradition, based upon the nature of the information sought.

Mr. Clark: Will the Solicitor General advise whether a review is now under way as to the extent of the circulation of documents that are classified as "Secret" or "Top Secret" from the security service or any other agencies? I am speaking of a review of the procedures of circulation within the public service or, indeed, among ministers and staffs of ministers.

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, I would expect the hon. member to ask me that question when we are dealing with estimates. I will take it as notice.

Mr. Clark: I would ask the Solicitor General to stop being so chippy with the House of Commons.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): He is an under-achiever; he is over-reacting.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: Since he has claimed that security would be in danger—that is the effect of his claim—will the Solicitor General tell the House of Commons how the security of Canada would be endangered by stating whether or not there was wide circulation of this supposedly secret document? How would it be endangered by giving that information to the Parliament of Canada to whom this government is responsible?

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, in order to provide that judgment for the hon. member, I would have to refer to the information that the hon. member is seeking from me; and that is exactly what I am not doing today.

DISCLOSURE OF NUMBER OF SECRET DOCUMENTS DISTRIBUTED

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, I have witnessed a number of examples of hypocrisy in this House, but nothing to equal that of the Solicitor General.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Diefenbaker: With regard to his knowledge of parliamentary procedure, on what basis is he making the statement

that it would not be parliamentary to give this information? Is it parliamentary to hide the truth in order to benefit the minister?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, the right hon. member is the only one on that side of the House who has had any experience in leading a government of this country. Surely he knows the nature of the information which is sought from me, and he knows that matters affecting national security are not the subject of comment if the information that is sought may be detrimental in relation to national security.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Why, then, has the minister been such a babbler outside the House of Commons? Has he been instructed by the Prime Minister to keep his mouth shut from now on and endeavour to delude parliament into reaching the conclusion that what he has been babbling about he must not explain because he knows he would be in difficulty?

● (1442)

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, outside the House I have provided exactly the same sort of information as I have given in the House—

An hon. Member: Blabbermouth!

Mr. Blais: —in discharging my role to communicate to the Canadian public the truth in respect of these matters and the position the government has taken, one which has been justified by the public reaction we are obtaining, a reaction causing so much preoccupation on the opposition benches.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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NATURAL RESOURCES

PROPOSED TAX CUTS FOR NICKEL MINING COMPANIES— REQUEST PROPOSAL BE ABANDONED

Mr. John Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. It has to do with the recent budget proposal by the Ontario government to allow Falconbridge and Inco to deduct from taxable profits the full costs of operating European refineries to process Ontario ore.

In view of the fact that recent lay-offs in Sudbury, Thompson and Port Colborne by Inco and Falconbridge are attributed to depressed nickel markets, not to lack of nickel resources, and since the Ontario proposal will continue to lock Canadians into the position of being hewers of wood and drawers of water, is the minister prepared to meet with Darcy McKeough, the Ontario Treasurer, to have him reverse this atrocious proposal? Further, is the minister prepared—if he is not successful—to initiate within his own level of government offsetting tax legislation to negate this blatant example of the selling-out of Canadian interests?