

Oral Questions

Canadian who has something of urgency to talk about with a Cabinet Minister, I think deserves a fair hearing.

● (1420)

REQUEST FOR MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we can quarrel about the legal authority of the Solicitor General. However, I waited until Parliament assembled today to hear the responses of the Solicitor General. In light of those responses, I must suggest strongly to the Minister that he sit down with the Prime Minister to discuss his continuing ability to hold the office he now holds. Under the circumstances of the Minister's responses, I believe that he has only one honourable choice to make.

Before that happens, I would ask him whether or not he would be willing to make a full statement to the House regarding his involvement with the affair in New Brunswick, the position and knowledge of the Minister of Justice regarding that particular file, and whatever knowledge the Prime Minister may have had.

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, in response to my right hon. friend, I can say, as I said earlier, that I have great respect for his office and his opinions. I can also say to him categorically that there was absolutely nothing improper about the meeting. No assurances were asked for and none were given. I maintain that under the circumstances, as I indicated to the Right Hon. Member at the beginning of Question Period, it was a proper thing for me to do.

As far as my discussions with the Prime Minister are concerned, the Prime Minister and I have many discussions. I say to the hon. gentleman, with all seriousness, that I do not know what, if anything, other Ministers may know about this particular matter. I do not know what the Minister of Justice or the Prime Minister may know. I know that I kept my own counsel on this matter.

I repeat to the Right Hon. Member that I made no effort to keep this meeting in any way secret or clandestine. It was interesting to me that the Official Opposition, with all its acuity and assiduity, had to wait until a journalist asked the obvious question: "Did you see Mr. Hatfield," to which I immediately replied: "Yes, I did".

REQUEST FOR MINISTER'S RESIGNATION

Mr. John Nunziata (York South-Weston): Mr. Speaker, it would appear as if the Solicitor General does not understand that it is a basic and fundamental principle of our criminal justice system that all persons be treated equally before the law. I would like to remind the Solicitor General that our Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees that every individual is equal before and under the law, and is entitled to equal protection and equal benefit of the law. It also appears as if the Minister is not aware that justice must not only be done but must appear to be done.

Would the Solicitor General not agree that by meeting with Premier Hatfield privately at a neutral, surreptitious location, he has created the appearance that justice is not being done and that Mr. Hatfield was given preferential treatment by his friends in Ottawa? Would he not agree that he has exercised poor and unacceptable judgment by involving himself personally in a criminal investigation? Will the Solicitor General not do the honourable thing and resign as Solicitor General immediately to maintain the integrity of our criminal justice system?

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my hon. friend's several questions and the answer to each one of them is no.

REQUEST FOR DETAILS OF DISCUSSIONS

Mr. John Nunziata (York South-Weston): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Solicitor General is aware that in this country it is a criminal offence to obstruct justice.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nunziata: It is no laughing matter, Mr. Speaker. It is a very serious matter.

Section 127 of the Criminal Code provides that anyone who attempts in any manner to obstruct, pervert or defeat the course of justice is guilty of a criminal offence.

Prior to agreeing to meet secretly with Premier Hatfield at the Chateau Laurier, was the Solicitor General not concerned that the meeting might be, or might be perceived to be an attempt to obstruct justice? During the meeting did he warn the Premier that anything the Premier said could be used in evidence against him in a court of law?

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I am aware of that particular Section of the Criminal Code. I trust that my hon. friend is not accusing me of being in violation of it. If he is, I hope he will be honest enough to say so. Finally, my answer to the Hon. Member is that I am not going to conduct a post-mortem on a confidential meeting, after the Premier of New Brunswick has been tried. I am not going to see him tried in the House of Commons.

SOLICITOR GENERAL'S CONDUCT

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. I believe the Deputy Prime Minister and I share one thing in terms of the way in which politics ought to be conducted, and that is a sense of the conduct we expect from Ministers of the Crown in the exercise of their responsibilities. Given all of the things the Deputy Prime Minister has said over many, many years, I would ask him if he does not feel that the meeting held between the Solicitor General and Premier Hatfield, given that the Solicitor General knew prior to the meeting that the Premier was under investigation, draws into question to the