

Oral Questions

acknowledgement was necessary, the letter having been brought up to that level I am not interested in all intermediary levels.

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, apparently the minister did not understand my question. I was not asking whether or not Mr. Parent had written to the Solicitor General to request that he not acknowledge the letter but rather whether or not the present Solicitor General had interviewed Mr. Parent at the time he wrote that letter to the minister's predecessor to inquire whether Mr. Parent knew of illegal activity by the RCMP, as is alleged in the letter; and if he did know of that, why he did not give that information to the Solicitor General, something which the former solicitor general says was not done by Mr. Parent or by Mr. Starnes or by Mr. Higgitt.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, I answered that very categorically at the beginning of my reply.

REQUEST FOR TABLING OF CORRESPONDENCE CONCERNING
REPLY TO ALLEGATION OF L'AGENCE DE PRESSE LIBRE

Mr. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo): The minister did not and he knows he did not. Is the minister at least prepared today to table the exchange of correspondence between the former solicitor general's former executive assistant and Mr. Parent, in which a request was made to the RCMP for advice on how to reply to the letter from L'Agence de Presse Libre du Québec and in which Mr. Parent advised that no acknowledgement be made?

Hon. Francis Fox (Solicitor General): With respect, Mr. Speaker, I answered the hon. member's first question in the negative. I indicated it had been answered in the negative because the matter had gone to the commissioner of the RCMP at that time, and that the solicitor general at that time had the opportunity during the course of the November 6 meeting—

Mr. Beatty: That letter was written before November 6.

Mr. Fox: Of course it was. How else could it be discussed on November 6 if it had not been written before November 6?

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Table it.

Mr. Fox: As to the hon. member's second question, I have not had the opportunity of discussing the matter of tabling the letter with my colleague the House leader; I want to discuss it with him to see whether it breaks any precedents of the House.

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TRANSPORT

PROPOSED MORATORIUM ON IMPORTATION OF FOREIGN-BUILT
SHIPS TO AID CANADIAN SHIPBUILDING INDUSTRY

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Mr. Speaker, I have a brief question for the Minister of Transport which has to do with the request of the Canadian shipbuilding

[Mr. Fox.]

industry. I pose the question in light of the very serious situation facing Canadian shipyards and shipbuilders over the next short term period. The request has to do with the seeking of a temporary moratorium on the importation of used foreign-built ships into the Canadian trade, and the request that this practice be halted for a period of time so as to assist in tiding over the Canadian industry during this period of difficulty. I wonder if the minister could indicate what his reaction to that request is. If he has not arrived at a decision, when does he think he will be in a position to indicate to the industry what his decision will be?

● (1500)

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, we have not arrived at a conclusion yet with regard to this question. We are considering it in light of the whole question of the shipbuilding industry in Canada.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, to begin with, I should point out that the House was supposed to convene at two o'clock, at which time there were no ministers in the House. You did not call the House to order for eight minutes, awaiting the arrival of ministers. Under normal circumstances there was ample time available then. Standing Order 15.(2) reads as follows:

Not more than two minutes after the reading of prayers, the business of the House shall commence.

Then it continues:

Not later than 2.15 p.m., or 11.15 a.m., as the case may be, oral questions shall be taken up.

Instead of waiting for 15 minutes, you proceeded having waited a period of eight minutes beyond when the House would normally be called to order, and you refused to hear me. It might have been a fault of communication. Those things sometimes happen. I want to be frank about this: apparently you were not informed, as I thought you would be, that I had a question I wished to raise under Standing Order 43. However, having regard to the reaction of the members opposite, it was reminiscent to me of what happened in 1956 when an all-powerful government with vociferous members tried at all times to deny the opposition any expression of their views, whether within or without the rules. I do not want to see a repetition of that.

I should point out that had you asked for consent to permit me to proceed, this group of individuals who sit opposite would not have granted it, in the same way as they regularly deny any discussion of anything under Standing Order 43, simply by one or two saying "no". Parliament cannot live when members do not respect the rights of an opposition.

I was endeavouring to bring a motion before the House in connection with a matter which I raised yesterday, namely that on Dominion Day,—

An hon. Member: Canada Day!

Mr. Diefenbaker: —in a national gathering on Parliament Hill, either Her Majesty the Queen or the Queen's representative in Canada, the Governor General, should speak. Accord-