

Since it is apparent that Mr. Justice Deschênes has passed this ball back to the House of Commons and to the Prime Minister, who is its chief member, I would ask him what steps he proposes to take by which the House of Commons can properly discuss two cases of impropriety, one of which the Chief Justice says was a very grave matter? Since it is our responsibility, and I contend primarily his, how does he propose we discharge that responsibility?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think the answer is very simple. The hon. member wants to know what means the House of Commons has to discuss this matter. It seems to me it took all day Tuesday to discuss this very matter.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister knows perfectly well that in the traditions of the House of Commons a matter can be discussed in one of two ways, either by having the matter referred to a standing committee of the House or by having an official inquiry. I am asking the Prime Minister which of those courses he proposes to follow, or whether he proposes to leave this matter in the air, which is the worst possible thing that could be done for parliament and for the members concerned.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I do not think it is fair to say it has been left in the air. The minister has issued an apology and so has the former minister issued an apology. Of course, it is to be expected that the House might not think this is enough. I have given reasons why I do not think it would be proper for the House of Commons to inquire into an issue which would mean subpoenaing judges before it. The hon. member mentioned another course, being the one of a committee of the House. I have invited hon. members opposite on several occasions to use this course if they so desire. If they know their duty they should lay a charge and we will examine it, then the proper consequences will follow.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I would suggest it is not necessary to lay a charge because the Chief Justice has accused two ministers of impropriety, and one of being a party to a very grave matter, so the charges are already here. The Prime Minister said the other day he did not agree with Mr. Justice Deschênes on certain points. Surely, those points ought to be cleared up. I ask the Prime Minister whether or not he is prepared to accept his responsibility and do either one of two things; refer this matter to a committee of the House or institute proper public inquiry?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, this is the same question over and over and over again. I suggest that perhaps the hon. member made—

An hon. Member: But it is true.

An hon. Member: And the same answers.

Oral Questions

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would gladly refuse to give them, if that is what the opposition prefers. The hon. member said I had said I disagreed with Justice Deschênes. I believe, and my recollection is to this effect, that I said I disagreed in some aspect with Mr. Justice Mackay, if the hon. member would want to look it up.

An hon. Member: Are you laying a charge?

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[Translation]

AGRICULTURE

SUGGESTED PROHIBITION OF IMPORTS OF MILK PRODUCTS IN 1976-77

Mr. Gilbert Rondeau (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Minister of Agriculture.

As we expect the minister to announce his new dairy policy for 1976-77 within a few days, has he made sure with his colleague on his right whether he can, for that year, forbid the entry into Canada of cheeses or dairy products that can be produced in Canada?

[English]

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, if I understand correctly, the debate later this day is to be on the dairy situation and I will be speaking during that debate. I am sure the hon. member concerned and others will be participating in the debate also, and the information should be forthcoming.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

INDIA—REQUEST FOR DETAILS OF AGREEMENT TO RESUME NUCLEAR AID—SUGGESTED TABLING OF AGREEMENT PRIOR TO RATIFICATION

Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs. Since it is now two weeks since negotiations took place in New Delhi about the resumption of nuclear aid to India, and since the minister said at that time, on March 5, that the government has every reason to want full disclosure of all the facts, given this two-week interval in which I presume this matter has been analysed in detail by cabinet, is the minister now in a position to inform the House as to the content of those negotiations and understandings?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, the hon. lady is misinformed. The matter has not yet come before cabinet.

Miss MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, in light of the statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs on March 11 that the negotiating team was acting under instructions—"Its terms of reference were established by me"—I should like to ask the acting minister, since the terms of reference at least were well known and clearly defined, whether he could inform us as to what the terms of reference were under which the negotiating team was operating?