

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Nunziata: Mr. Speaker, it is very important that the Government should launch an immediate inquiry concerning those very serious allegations.

[English]

REQUEST FOR SUSPENSION OF BOARD MEMBER

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): My supplementary question to the Solicitor General is this. Pending the conclusion of this full and complete inquiry, will the Solicitor General suspend National Parole Board member, Louis Laporte, in view of the allegation of Mr. Laporte's involvement in this matter? Can the Solicitor General assure the House today that no Member of Parliament improperly interfered in this particular case?

● (1440)

Hon. James Kelleher (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, we have a system of justice in this country that a man or people are presumed to be innocent. Immediately upon learning of these allegations on Monday I asked both the National Parole Board and the RCMP to investigate. I think it is only proper and fair that I hear from them in a preliminary way before I take any action.

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BANKS AND BANKING

TREATMENT OF LUMBER COMPANIES

Mr. John A. MacDougall (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for Finance. Is the Minister aware that the federal Government's agreement with the United States on softwood lumber exports has placed the financial arrangements of lumber companies with their banks in jeopardy? The situation is directly caused by leading banking institutions using the abundance of misinformation on Canada's settlement to their benefit. Could the Minister tell the House whether he is prepared to get in touch with the banking institutions and inform them that the agreement between Canada and the United States on the lumber industry is a good one?

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Axworthy: Did you vote yes or no on the Bill?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my hon. friend for—

An Hon. Member: Yes or no.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I trust that under the circumstances the Hon. Minister will not be tempted to answer with just yes or no.

Mr. Hockin: No, Mr. Speaker. I first want to commend my hon. friend for being alert to possible problems with regard to credit facilities for this industry. I want to make clear, first of all, that we expect banks to show the same level of reasonableness and fairness to all their customers. If we have specific instances of the kinds of scare tactics which he is mentioning, and if we could have documentation of them, I would like him to bring them forward, because certainly if there has been any instance of breach or violation of law, we will act accordingly.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL PAROLE BOARD

OPPORTUNITY FOR REFERRAL TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND SOLICITOR GENERAL

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Solicitor General. We have a Tory parole commissioner recommended by the Hon. Member for Joliette. We have a Tory lawyer who immediately hires an inmate liberated by that commissioner, after pressure has been put by the same lawyer. My question is this: Is the Minister ready to co-operate fully, not with the RCMP but with the Standing Committee on Justice and the Solicitor General, to investigate on possible corruption and political pressure in connection with paroling in Quebec? Will he co-operate with the Standing Committee?

[English]

Hon. James Kelleher (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, as I have previously advised the House and the other Hon. Member, these are allegations at this point. I do not know what truth, if any, there is to them. I immediately asked the RCMP and the National Parole Board to look into these matters. That was scarcely 48 hours ago. I think simple justice demands that no action be taken until at least I have some preliminary reports on what action should or should not be taken.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, once again the Government and the Minister do not seem to understand that the role of the RCMP is not to look into this kind of allegation. It is to look into criminal wrongdoing, not political pressure.

REQUEST THAT COMMITTEE MEETING BE CONVENED

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Justice and Solicitor General. I would like to ask him whether he is prepared to convene immediately a meeting of the standing committee. Is he prepared to ensure that these very serious allegations of possible political pressure in the National Parole Board in Quebec will be fully investigated by that committee soon?