COMMONS DEBATES

Oral Questions

Mr. Nunziata: Mr. Speaker, the first version says that the defectors committee had made a final decision on March 1. The second version says that the defectors committee did not decide or had not made a final decision on March 1.

Again I ask the minister, what version is the truth: version A or version B?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am quite prepared to answer all questions on this issue. I think it is unfortunate that hon. members are trying to pre-empt their own committee.

I do not have the documents with me because I came with them to the committee this morning and I will have them with me at the committee this afternoon. I will answer all questions related to these documents at that time, as will my two colleagues.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the same minister.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Where were you this morning, Svend?

Mr. Robinson: The minister responsible for constitutional affairs says where were you. I was in the committee prepared to ask questions of ministers who, instead, were hiding behind civil servants.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. members know that this is not the committee this afternoon.

An hon. member: This is the mother of all committees.

An hon. member: And where is the father?

Mr. Speaker: I know the hon. member would want to put a very careful question.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, in this House ministers cannot hide behind public servants.

I want to ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask if the members on the other side will allow members on this side to put serious questions of concern of Canadians.

I want to ask the minister this question. In view of the new report, the revised standard version of the government's response to the Al-Mashat affair, will the minister explain to Canadians, through this House, why it was

that after she learned on April 16 that Al-Mashat had been allowed into Canada, why it was that according to the new report she did not take any steps whatsoever to order a full and thorough inquiry into what went wrong here? How can she explain her negligence as a minister in this important question?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will have an answer to his question on the basis of the documents, even though what he has put before the House is not certainly the facts as I would perceive them. He will have that answer this afternoon in committee.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the minister could then clarify, if she says she is going to be bringing answers to committee. Is the minister also prepared to table in the committee this afternoon all the documents that were requested by the committee on Tuesday, including the complete immigration file of Al-Mashat from Vienna? Will she come clean with Canadians on this file?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it was the people on this side of the House who came forward with a view that the committee should look at this. That was our initiative.

We are quite happy to have the committee look at everything that is appropriate to go before a committee as we have in the past.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I think Canadians would say that what is appropriate is the truth and that is what we are looking for on this question.

● (1430)

Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary is to the same minister.

I would like to ask why the minister, after learning on April 16 that Al-Mashat had been allowed into Canada, despite the earlier decision of both this minister and the former Secretary of State for External Affairs to deny admission to a previous Iraqi diplomat, did not tell the then Secretary of State for External Affairs, did not tell her successor as Minister of Immigration. Why did this minister tell no one about this flagrant breach of immigration law in this country? Why did she clam up and cover up this issue?