

Even if they wanted,
No votes for them, I fear. But when it comes to safe seats,
The Liberals should not feel too warm.
For Kevin Gaudet with his worthy team
Gave a glimpse of the Reform swarm.

Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): Resign and we'll have a byelection.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

• (1415)

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, obviously to give the impression that he is always in control of his department, the minister of defence has called for the suspension of Major-General Brian Vernon, thereby throwing him to the wolves, using him as a scapegoat to calm public opinion. But Major-General Vernon should not bear the sole burden of responsibility for the incidents in Petawawa.

Does the minister of defence intend to suspend or relieve of their duties all officers in charge of the Airborne Regiment who took part in incidents violating army regulations or officers who failed to intervene to put a stop to such activities?

[English]

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member does not obviously listen to answers that I have given before.

The removal of General Vernon was a decision taken by the chief of the defence staff. It is his and his alone. It is a decision in which I concurred.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, whereas I am accused of not listening to the answers, the minister does not listen to the questions; that is not what I asked.

Can the minister of defence—and I hope he will understand my second question better—confirm that the government will soon award the Order of Military Merit to Lieutenant-Colonel Kenward, the very person who was supposed to have cleaned up the Second Airborne Regiment of Petawawa and who was commander-in-chief at the time of the incidents recorded on the third video-cassette? Does he still intend to award the Order of Military Merit to this lieutenant-colonel?

[English]

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that particu-

Oral Questions

lar decoration was decided a number of months ago by a panel in the military following normal practices and will go ahead as planned.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, does the Prime Minister consider it normal that his minister of defence still intends to decorate Lieutenant-Colonel Kenward, the former commanding officer of the Second Airborne Regiment, and in fact to do so even before the start of the inquiry which is supposed to get to the bottom of the events in Petawawa? Does he consider that normal?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister of defence just gave a very clear explanation. If I heard him right, his peers decided to award that individual the decoration. That will not prevent the committee from asking him the appropriate questions when he comes before the commission.

Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of defence.

The latest information revealed regarding the Petawawa incidents shows that the minister of defence does not know what is going on in his department. Incidentally, we have been waiting, since last fall, for a reply from the minister regarding the use of an Airbus A-310 by generals who went to Florida to go play a game of golf during Operation William Tell.

Will the minister of defence tell us whether he knows anything about the Canadian army's Eagle River exercise?

[English]

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of question, as you have advised members before, that should be reflected in an Order Paper approach rather than in question period.

• (1420)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg, BQ): Mr. Speaker, once again, I will have to tell the minister what is going on in his department. How can the minister of defence, in this time of fiscal restraint, not realize that the Eagle River exercise was a sham, designed to hide a sumptuous fishing trip to Labrador for senior officers of the Canadian army, at a cost of over \$1.6 million for taxpayers in 1993?

[English]

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certainly as far as I am concerned this is the type of question that should be for the Order Paper. When it is put down we will give all the details and costs of any particular program.