

Oral Questions

suggesting any conflict of interest involving Mr. Amyot in the selection of the building in Montreal? Is the Government now considering, or is it to consider, anything in the report which might affect the continued employment of Mr. Amyot in Air Canada?

● (1450)

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I think that, as the Minister of Justice has already pointed out, the matter of conflict of interest is one which will now be referred to the Attorney General in Quebec.

Some Hon. Members: No, no.

Mr. Dick: That's for criminal matters.

Mr. Axworthy: That is a matter that was purely and completely in the hands of the legal process. I have just received a report on the particular situation this morning. I will be having an opportunity over the weekend, I hope, to review it carefully, to discuss it and examine it with the appropriate officials. At that time we would have to make some judgments, but at this time we have not had the opportunity to do so.

held its fourteenth Triennial Congress in Winnipeg. The federal Government was represented by the Minister of State for Finance, who gave a speech on behalf of the Government which was received by that body, and by Ukrainian Canadians, as being offensive and containing racist stereotyping. The Minister quoted, with approval, the speech of Clifford Sifton wherein he described central Europeans as follows:

I think a stalwart peasant in a sheep-skin coat, born on the soil, whose forefathers have been farmers for ten generations, with a stout wife and a half-dozen children, is good quality.

The Congress has written to the Prime Minister complaining about the speech and the references made by the Minister of State for Finance. What is the Prime Minister going to do about this matter?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I do not know of the speech, but I do know the Minister and I am absolutely certain that he intended no racial or other slur.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Madam Speaker, I can only describe the remarks of the Minister of State for Finance made to the Congress as being in the tradition of Earl Butz.

REFERENCES TO CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): I would like to direct a supplementary question to the Minister of Transport. He cannot weasel out of it that way. I said, quite apart from any criminal charges that are possibly being considered, the question of conflict of interest stands apart. Is the Government considering the references in the report to conflict of interest which would affect the continued employment of Mr. Amyot? He told the House yesterday that there was no anticipation that Mr. Amyot would resign. Is he just as certain today as he was yesterday?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I would like to make it very clear to the Hon. Member that it is a matter that I treat with some degree of seriousness and will therefore give the report the proper attention it deserves. When we can make those kinds of judgments, we will make them, not according to the timetable of the Hon. Member.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. McDermid: A little nervous over there.

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MULTICULTURALISM

UKRAINIAN CONGRESS—COMPLAINT ABOUT MINISTER'S SPEECH

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. On October 8, over the past weekend, the Ukrainian Canadian Committee

POSITION OF PRIME MINISTER

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West): I want to ask the Prime Minister a supplementary question. He gave a lot of free advice yesterday as to the activities of a member of the other place. I want to ask him whether or not, since this man is involved in the policy-making of the Government, he will tolerate this kind of racist statement with respect to a very important component of our population, or whether he will try to slough it off and suggest that this is not an inappropriate, offensive kind of speech, as indicated in a letter from the Congress, which was adopted unanimously.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I repeat, I do not know the speech. I would be happy to look at it.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: It's been delivered to everybody's office.

Mr. Trudeau: I do know the Minister. He is a man of high sensitivity and culture. The Hon. Member says that he was quoting something?

Mr. Hnatyshyn: The speech that was delivered to my office and to your office, too.

Mr. Trudeau: No, but I understood the Hon. Member said that he was quoting something about—

Mr. Andre: Another Grit.

Mr. Trudeau: Who was he quoting, Madam Speaker, and in what context?

Mr. McGrath: He was quoting from the speech.

Mr. Trudeau: No, no, I understand—