

Oral Questions

were made in the letter that the Minister received in early August.

If the Minister did nothing with the letter, if the letter contains serious allegations and the Minister did nothing for six or seven weeks, we must ask the Minister to resign for failing to do his duty.

So my question is: When did the Minister submit the letter to the RCMP and why did he defer giving the letter to the RCMP once he had read it?

[English]

Hon. Stewart McInnes (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member and others are making and have made many erroneous statements of fact. Some of their statements are based on conversations on a tape, some on a letter which they have not seen. People up there are making error after error. I would like to try to clarify it but I must await the report of the RCMP investigation.

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Mr. Mike Cassidy (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about the conduct of the Minister prior to his passing this letter on to the RCMP and the commencement of their investigation. We are talking about whether or not the Minister acted appropriately and properly. He knows the letter will sooner or later be made public. In not indicating when he passed it to the RCMP he is indicating that he must have failed in his duty as a Minister to pass that letter on if it contained serious allegations.

Did it contain serious allegations? If it did, how long did the Minister have it and why did he not pass it on to the RCMP immediately?

Hon. Stewart McInnes (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Hon. Member to have patience.

MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister and I have been following this issue and I would like to put a question or two to him relating to the sale of the radar base in the Prime Minister's riding.

Quite apart from the issue of any criminal responsibility or any investigation by the RCMP, there is the issue of political responsibility and competence. I would have thought that the Government by now, particularly after the multimillion dollar Parker inquiry, would have understood the difference. We are talking here about ministerial responsibility and ministerial competence. I will try to stay within the facts as they have been presented to the House.

Speaking to the Prime Minister through the Deputy Prime Minister, does he think it right for a Conservative organizer to have interfered actively in the bidding process and sale of the

radar base? Was it right for the former Conservative candidate from Hull, now on the staff of the Minister of Public Works, to intervene in the process?

Mr. Speaker: The Chair is in some difficulty. These seem to be very direct charges.

Some Hon. Members: Exactly!

Mr. Speaker: I have had to say in past cases like this that it is not appropriate to use a preamble to make a charge. If a charge is to be made, there are of course formal ways to do it. I know the right hon. gentleman would understand that.

At the same time I am repeating what I have said in the past, that on issues like this the Opposition not only has a right to ask questions, it has a duty. At the same time I have to ask Hon. Members to make sure that the preambles to the questions do not amount in effect to a charge in lieu of a charge put in a formal way.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, I will stay within the parameters you have laid down. My questions are also within the parameters of the issues discussed here Thursday, Friday, and today.

Was it competent for the Minister of National Defence to say there had been no intervention by the Prime Minister's Office when we learned there was a phone call from that office? Was it right for the Minister of Public Works to be meeting only this weekend with his staff on this issue when he received a registered letter from a senior official of his Department on August 5?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, and President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition is a distinguished Member of this Chamber and has served here for a long time. He is also a lawyer and I think he knows something about basic and fundamental justice. I believe he is indeed making allegations which I am not sure he can substantiate. Perhaps it is time for me to remind the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition of the four criteria that he set out to govern the conduct of his own members in dealing with these kinds of issues.

I am reading from the *Toronto Star* and an article by Joe O'Donnell where the right hon. gentleman said that strict rules of conduct for MPs should be applied. Number one, unless you know the facts and really know the facts, don't say them. Number two, know when you have made your case. Number three, remember that this is not only affecting government but an institution called Parliament, and affecting us as Members of Parliament.

Mr. Rossi: Number four, answer the question.

Mr. Mazankowski: The fourth one is to remember that we have unemployed out there and farmers and fishermen and other people who are in desperate difficulty. Perhaps the Right