

Oral Questions

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General): Madam Speaker, Devon Cole is a resident in my constituency, a former resident in my constituency, who worked in election campaigns and works actively in community activities in my constituency. He is not an employee of the government or an employee of my ministry, and never has been. He worked as a volunteer in election campaigns.

REMUNERATION FOR ELECTION WORK

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, did Mr. Devon Cole receive any compensation of any kind from any source for his work on behalf of the Solicitor General of Canada in an election campaign?

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General): Madam Speaker, I believe he worked, for a short period of time, as a driver in one of my campaigns, not for the full campaign. The expense was disclosed in my statement of spending during the campaign.

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ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

POSITION OF SOLICITOR GENERAL

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, the Solicitor General will know that as a result of comments he made urging members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to carry on acts that had been declared illegal by the McDonald Royal Commission, several prominent Canadian lawyers have petitioned the Law Society of Upper Canada to have the Solicitor General investigated for unprofessional conduct. Would the Solicitor General be prepared to invite, himself, the Law Society of Upper Canada to carry out an investigation of his conduct to see if it is unprofessional conduct in relation to the matter raised by these lawyers—

Mr. Peterson: You are on a fishing expedition.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Clark: I do not want to be shouted down by members of the government, Madam Speaker. Would he be prepared to invite that investigation which has been requested by a number of prominent lawyers?

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General): Madam Speaker, that letter, which is well known and has been made public, is not directed to my conduct. It is directed to the policies which I have approved for the operations of the RCMP. I do not believe it is within the mandate of the Law Society or of the disciplinary committee to review the policies which I have established for the RCMP. I believe that the place for those policies to be reviewed is here. I have frequently explained them in committee and in the House. I am prepared to do so.

• (1200)

These policies, when criticized by the McDonald Commission, were confirmed by me with the law officers of the Crown, who have advised me that these policies which I have in place are supported by precedent and are perfectly lawful. Notwithstanding that, for further assurance. I went outside and obtained two outside legal opinions on these policies, which are the subject of the complaint of these lawyers to the Law Society. Both of the opinions which I obtained supported these policies. I continue to believe that they are proper, and they continue to be the policies of the RCMP.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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THE JUDICIARY

CONDUCT OF SOLICITOR GENERAL IN SUBMITTING CHARACTER REFERENCES

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, since, in the case of Arrindell and English, the Solicitor General and the Prime Minister have made the incredible claim that the Solicitor General was acting in his private capacity, rather than in his ministerial capacity, a claim which no one in this House can accept, with the exception, perhaps, of the Liberal Party, given its standards. And since the conduct of the Solicitor General, acting as a lawyer, has been called into question by the president of the Canadian Bar Association, would the Solicitor General, in order to clear his name, invite an inquiry into the propriety of his conduct by either the Canadian Bar Association—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Clark:—or the Law Society of Upper Canada, having regard to the fact that the Prime Minister and the Solicitor General have made it impossible for Parliament to judge that behaviour which they claim was private? Will he allow the governing body of his professional association to look into his professional conduct in this matter?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General): The evidence that I put forward in those trials was evidence put forward in open court, not as a lawyer, not as the Solicitor General of Canada, but as someone who knew the individuals. I am a lawyer and I am the Solicitor General of Canada, but if the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition wants to make the point that this was done in my character as Solicitor General of Canada, I do not see how he can argue at the same time that it should be put forward as conduct of a lawyer to the Law Society of Upper Canada.

Before sending those letters, I considered the propriety of them and was satisfied that they did not violate the guidelines set down by the Prime Minister, in any sense of the word.