

Oral Questions

to obtaining the best possible guarantees on mortgage loans, and is a very real problem when a loan must be called.

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[English]

CRIMINAL CODE**ABORTIONS CONDUCTED IN WINNIPEG CLINIC**

Hon. Jake Epp (Provencher): Madam Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Minister of Justice. It relates to the Morgentaler clinic in Winnipeg. Up to this point of time the Attorney General in Manitoba has argued that there is nothing wrong with the establishment of a clinic. However, the clinic did not receive hospital status and did not establish a therapeutic abortion committee. Therefore, now that Morgentaler has said that abortions are being performed, it is obviously in contravention of the Criminal Code of Canada.

While I know, and the Minister of Justice recognizes, that the administration of justice is a provincial matter, has he discussed this matter with the Attorney General of Manitoba? Obviously it is now a very public flaunting of the Criminal Code of Canada, a law which is passed through this House, through the Parliament of Canada. Obviously this has some very serious implications for the administration of law and the perception of law in the country. Would the Minister tell the House what discussions he has had, or what methods of remedy he is recommending in this case?

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Minister of Justice): Madam Speaker, I have not had discussions with the Attorney General of Manitoba in this case. I find it hard to imagine circumstances in which I would feel that to be appropriate. The law, as my hon. friend knows, is made by this House, but its administration is in the hands of the provincial Governments.

It is certainly my impression that the Attorney General of Manitoba has indicated that, when the proper information is provided to him by law enforcement authorities in that Province, he will take the appropriate action according to the law. However, Madam Speaker, even if, in a hypothetical case, a provincial Attorney General were to take a different view of the law, I do not believe, as Minister of Justice in the federal Government, I would have any authority to overrule or in any way countermand the role which the provincial Attorney General is taking in carrying out his duties. That is a matter for the people and the Government of that Province. I have no reason as yet, Madam Speaker, to think that that, in any event, is the situation here.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE IN MANITOBA

Hon. Jake Epp (Provencher): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Minister of Justice. I appreciate the sensitivity in which he relates to the division of powers between the federal and provincial Governments. I appreciate that. However, up to the present time the provincial

Attorney General has always argued that there was no breaking or breaching of the law until in fact an abortion took place. The fact is that they have now taken place, and are taking place. That is public knowledge, if we are to believe Morgentaler's word.

The law is being broken. That is public knowledge. Therefore I ask the Minister, in fulfilling the law and carrying out justice, does it not seem passing strange, in terms of that administration, that the defence of the Attorney General of Manitoba now is, "Well, it is a police matter"? He is again washing his hands of it. If the administration of justice is in fact the responsibility of the Province, how can the law be upheld when the Attorney General of Manitoba now says that it is not his responsibility, it is a police matter? He is washing his hands of a matter for which he directly has to take responsibility.

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Minister of Justice): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member is in effect asking me, as federal Minister of Justice, to pass judgment on the manner in which the Attorney General of the Province carries out his office. I do not feel, Madam Speaker, that I have the constitutional jurisdiction to make such a judgment. I think it would be improper for me to do so. I have my own opinions on the question, but I believe I am not entitled, by virtue of my office, to give vent to those ideas in public. That is a question which my hon. friend must address publicly, if he wishes, to the Attorney General of Manitoba.

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FISHERIES**ISSUANCE OF FIREARMS TO EAST COAST FISHERY INSPECTORS**

Hon. Allan Lawrence (Durham-Northumberland): Madam Speaker, I also would like to ask a question of one of the few Ministers here today, the Minister of Justice. Yesterday, according to press reports, at the direct request of the federal Department of Fisheries, certain Fisheries inspectors on the East Coast, in relation to the lobster dispute, were issued firearms, including shotguns. My question is in relation to this rather extreme step. Are Fisheries inspectors "peace officers" under the required provincial and federal statutes? What is the legislative authority for issuing firearms to Fisheries inspectors?

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, on behalf of my colleague, the Minister of Fisheries, for whom I am taking questions, I will answer what I know of the past precedents. I am not familiar with the legal interpretation of the words used by the Hon. Member. In the past we have authorized the Fisheries officers who have been trained—more recently they have been trained by the RCMP in Regina—and who are in dangerous situations, particularly on the Pacific coast where they go into deep canyons on the Fraser River and other places, to carry weapons for self-defence.