

Oral Questions

justice, rehashing this whole situation in the House of Commons.

MINISTERIAL DISCRETION

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I want to get at this question. It is one thing to have the presumption of innocence before a court of law, when it is judiciously reviewed and there is a chance for examination and cross-examination. However, we are going to a separate question, that of the initiation of the proceedings and the discretion of whether or not to lay a charge. The Solicitor General knows there has been a lot of judicial and academic comment as to whether that process ought to be judicial as well. I ask the Solicitor General, did he not know he was interfering in the beginning of a prosecution and the discretion of whether or not to lay a charge, or what charge to lay? Why would he participate in a conversation when the investigation was already known and that could only have been the purpose of the meeting?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nystrom: The godfather.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: He does not know the difference between the Attorney General and the Solicitor General.

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): You were not there.

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, I am really astonished at the ignorance of a former Solicitor General who should know better—

Mr. Allmand: I would never do that.

Mr. Nielsen: —and a former Minister of Justice, who should know better—

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): This is called reaping the whirlwind, Erik.

Mr. Nielsen: —when they publicly attempt to leave the impression that there is something less than an arm's length relationship that exists between the Solicitor General and the RCMP.

Mr. Allmand: What was agreed to?

Mr. Nielsen: That is precisely the relationship that exists. As a former Minister of Justice he knows, as does the former Solicitor General, that when the RCMP seek advice as to whether to lay charges or the nature of such charges to be laid, it is not the Solicitor General's advice that is sought; it is the advice of the Department of Justice.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: The Attorney General.

Mr. Lapierre: Why did he go there?

Mr. Nielsen: The Attorney General of Canada, my House Leader reminds me.

Mr. Axworthy: What was the meeting about?

Mr. Nielsen: That is the routine chain, and to leave any other impression is a distortion of the truth and not worthy of the right hon. gentleman.

Mr. Chrétien: He can stop the investigation.

DISCUSSIONS INQUIRY

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Solicitor General and it is a very simple question. Could he tell the House exactly what he was told by Premier Hatfield and what was discussed at the meeting, and whom he reported to about what was discussed at that meeting in that hotel room?

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the Hon. gentleman opposite, as I said before, that I have no intention of doing a post-mortem—

Mr. Nunziata: What are you hiding?

Mr. MacKay: —on what I consider to be a confidential meeting.

I can also assure him—

Mr. Fulton: You are digging your grave, Elmer.

Mr. MacKay: I can also assure him that I informed everyone who should have been informed, including the Commissioner of the RCMP.

Mr. Nystrom: And John Crosbie?

Mr. Chrétien: Before or after?

Mr. MacKay: And I can further assure him that I kept my counsel about this matter and did not discuss it with other Cabinet colleagues.

DISCUSSION WITH RCMP COMMISSIONER

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I would like the Solicitor General to tell the House whether he discussed the matter with the Commissioner of the RCMP before or after his meeting with Premier Hatfield? Also, if this was a confidential meeting, why did he tell the Leader of the Opposition, earlier in Question Period, that it was not a secret meeting? He cannot have it both ways.

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Solicitor General of Canada): I can tell my hon. friend that he cannot have it both ways either. The meeting was not in any way secret. The meeting was held in a neutral place—

Mr. Chrétien: Why neutral? Why not in your office?