

Oral Questions

be dropped, just like a hot potato, with a shameless and no-guilt face?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I am sure you will understand very well the position I am in. If I make any comment on that, it will be read differently by different people. I can only remind my hon. friend that there was a big "if" at the beginning of my previous answer.

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POST OFFICE

REPORT OF LETTER WRITTEN BY DEPARTMENTAL OFFICIAL

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my question is supplementary to one I asked earlier of the Prime Minister and the Postmaster General who will now have had the opportunity to check with their officials. I am advised that the letter in question was written by Mr. Rolf Bischoff, marketing director for the Montreal postal district.

● (1500)

I would like the Postmaster General to stay in the House to listen to the question. Perhaps he wishes that the House of Commons had risen rather than stay here to answer questions. I cannot recall an occasion in this House of Commons when a minister has walked out in the middle of a question being put.

Madam Speaker: Order. The Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition rises at three o'clock, at which time he realizes I should cut off question period. However, I have allowed him to ask the question. I hope he will not rise so late in the future because I will not be able to recognize him, but I did allow that. I hope he will ask his question and be as brief as possible.

Mr. Clark: I will ask my question if the minister to whom I directed it will come back to the House of Commons. Here he comes. The minister smiles at his contempt for the House of Commons.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Clark: My information is that the letter in question was signed by Mr. Rolf Bischoff the marketing director for the Montreal postal district, that it was a letter dated June 29. The existence of that letter was confirmed to Montreal Canadian Press reporter Larry Black, both by Mr. Bischoff in Montreal and by Francis Harding in the Ottawa office of the Post Office. Will the minister responsible for the Post Office now extend to the House of Commons the courtesy that has been extended to Canadian Press and confirm to the House that such a letter was written, such an offer was made to look after the powerful clients of the Post Office and, most important, that this was done prior to the strike on June 29?

[Translation]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Postmaster General): Madam Speaker, immediately after that question was raised in the House, I contacted the officials of my department to obtain additional information. When the Leader of the Opposition rose to put his question for the second time, a page told me that I was wanted on the telephone by someone who would be giving me the answer to the question. So I left the House to take that call. I now have the information which I can make public and thus answer the question of the Leader of the Opposition. Madam Speaker, I must say that the Leader of the Opposition has misinterpreted that letter, that he was completely wrong to interpret it as he did, and that as early as tomorrow I will be in a position to shed more light on the question if we are given an opportunity to do so.

[English]

REQUEST THAT MINISTER TABLE LETTER

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, the Postmaster General has referred specifically to that letter. He will know that even if the rules do not permit a minister to walk out in the middle of a question being posed him, they do require him to table correspondence and documents to which he has referred specifically. I ask the Postmaster General to follow the rules of the House and to table that letter to which he has made reference.

[Translation]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Postmaster General): Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is obviously flouting the Standing Orders of the House. I have not seen any letter. I have no document in my hand. I said I would check. I sought information from my officials and they told me that, once again, the Leader of the Opposition is mistaken. I will look further into this matter and answer any question he may want to ask me tomorrow. For the time being I fully reprove the altogether unspeakable conduct of the Leader of the Opposition.

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POINT OF ORDER

MR. PINARD—TIME ALLOTTED TO ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I should like to draw your attention to two standing orders of the House which, unless I am mistaken, are still in force and perhaps too clear. I quote Standing Order 15(2):

Not later than 2:15 p.m., or 11:15 a.m., as the case may be, oral questions shall be taken up. At 3:00 p.m., or 12:00 noon,—