

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): It must be a slow day. I really cannot understand what the Hon. Member is trying to prove. I see no inconsistency with what has been said. I was a witness, and I think the Hon. Member was in the House at that time and he witnessed the resignation, sadly, of the former Minister of National Defence. It was announced in the House by the former Minister.

Mr. Nunziata: Was he or wasn't he fired?

Mr. Nielsen: As far as I am concerned, surely all Hon. Members in the House can take that as compelling evidence of the origination of the resignation by the Minister himself, as sad an occasion as that was.

Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): So much for clarity.

Mr. Hopkins: So much for clarity. The Deputy Prime Minister knows very well that is normal procedure. It's behind the scenes that we want to know what went on.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Forrestall: Come on over, Len.

REASON FOR RESIGNATION

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Many Canadians are still asking why the former Minister resigned. The Prime Minister said he did nothing wrong. The Secretary of State for External Affairs said he was not asked for his resignation. The Prime Minister said he was asked for his resignation. The Prime Minister said there was no breach of security, that he is an honourable man—and I agree—and that he did not breach any conflict of interest, and on and on it goes.

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Hopkins: Why then did he resign? I ask again who is telling the truth, the Secretary of State for External Affairs or the Prime Minister? Stop stonewalling.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): What nonsense.

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I always make the utmost endeavour to answer all questions with that degree of clarity—

Mr. Nunziata: You had better go to confession tomorrow, Erik.

Mr. Nielsen:—which the clarity of the question itself requires. As far as the reason for the resignation is concerned, Hon. Members of this House have that reason from the lips of the former Minister himself. Surely the Hon. Member could adopt the longstanding tradition of this House and accept the word of the Minister who resigned on that very regrettable occasion.

Oral Questions

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

UNITED STATES—PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO GERMANY

Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. In view of the Prime Minister's close ties with President Ronald Reagan, will the Government urge the President to cancel his proposed visit to the cemetery for the SS troops?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, in view of the Government's regard for the sovereignty and sovereign decisions of other countries, we will leave decisions about United States policy to be taken by the administration of the United States.

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION

Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, considering Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's recent statement of disagreement with the President's decision, will the Secretary of State for External Affairs suggest to the Prime Minister that it would be an act of friendship if the Prime Minister would telephone President Reagan and urge him to reconsider?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, if the suggestion comes from the Hon. Member to the Government of the United States, I doubt that it could be interpreted as an act of friendship.

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ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

ENFORCEMENT OF YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

Mr. Alan Redway (York East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Solicitor General. The police chief of Metropolitan Toronto, Jack Marks, has recently indicated his great concern about the Young Offenders Act. Among other concerns, he stated that his force's hands are tied in dealing with some 300 cases involving arson, theft, assault, and sexual assault, because the suspects are under 12 years of age. He has asked for a review of the Young Offenders Act. Would the Acting Solicitor General indicate to the House whether he would be prepared to have a review such as is called for by the chief?

● (1140)

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. I am informed by officials of the Department of the Solicitor General that they are in fact very closely monitoring the operation of the new law. I might point out that the police may deal with the age group referred to by the chief under the provisions of the provincial child welfare legislation and other relevant provincial laws. There are vehicles and devices available to the law enforcement agencies.