

GRITS HALT INQUIRY

'Mackasey protected'

OTTAWA (CP) — Liberal MPs were accused of trying to protect former cabinet minister Bryce Mackasey Tuesday when they temporarily abandoned a Commons inquiry into allegations that Mackasey was paid to lobby.

Liberals outvoted Progressive Conservative members of the Commons privileges and elections committee, choosing to halt their investigation while Mackasey faces RCMP charges of influence-peddling.

The Liberals argued that the committee could hurt the chances of a fair trial for Mackasey, who has pleaded not guilty.

But the Montreal Gazette, which published stories last March that prompted Mackasey to ask for the inquiry, said the committee appeared to be protecting the veteran Liberal MP instead of ruling on a claim that the newspaper had breached his privilege as an MP.

"Yes, I'm upset," Robert McConnell, The Gazette's publisher, told reporters after his last-minute appeal to be heard again by the committee was rejected.

He said the Liberals argue they are protecting the principle that an accused person has the right to an unprejudiced trial, but the committee did not mention the trials of two other men charged in the Mackasey case.

McConnell said The Gazette articles have been at least partly vindicated by the fact the RCMP laid three charges against Mackasey under Criminal Code sections dealing with influence-peddling.

Liberal David Smith rejected The Gazette argu-

ment and earlier suggestions from Tory MP Sinclair Stevens that the Liberals were calling off the committee work too early.

"That's complete and utter crap," Smith said of McConnell's statement.

But Smith had difficulty explaining the absence of any reference in the motion that postponed the committee's work to the trials of Montreal Board of Trade president Robert Harrison and lawyer Jean Bruyere.

Harrison and Bruyere have been charged under sections of the Criminal Code dealing with bribery, and both have also pleaded not guilty.

The three men have chosen trial by jury.

The committee began its work in March after The Gazette quoted Harrison as telling a bankruptcy hearing Mackasey owned a numbered company, 109609 Canada Ltee, that had been established to lobby for Les Ateliers d'usinage Hall Ltee, a Montreal machining firm that collapsed last year.

Mackasey, promising to resign if his name was not cleared, denied he had ever owned 109609 or been paid to lobby.

The committee learned, however, that 109609 paid Mackasey \$400,000 in 1981 for a stock portfolio valued at only \$178,000. The MP denied the generous stock deal was a favor returned for lobbying he had done on behalf of Les Ateliers.

But after an eight-month investigation of the Les Ateliers bankruptcy and the numbered company, the RCMP charged Mackasey, Harrison and Bruyere, the former president of Les Ateliers, last week.

Byelection no contest for Tories

BRANDON, Man. (CP) — The popularity of the Progressive Conservative party in southwestern Manitoba is hard to question after the landslide win of history Prof. Lee Clark in the Brandon-Souris federal byelection Tuesday night.

Soon after the polls closed, it was clear Clark was headed for Parliament. But the scope of the victory was a surprise, even to some Tories.

The race also was a personal victory for Clark, a soft-spoken Brandon University academic and farmer whose grey hair makes him look older than his 46 years. He proved doubters inside and outside his party wrong by taking over the virtual fiefdom held by Walter Dinsdale for 31 years until his death last fall.

"I think tonight's victory was better than most of us expected," Clark said as he understated the devastation he inflicted on his opposition in the three-party race.

Second-place New Democrat Bill Moore, 42, edged out Liberal lawyer Joe Mullally, who was making his second run at the seat.

Clark swept both urban and rural polls, losing about eight out of 200 to Moore. Mullally, second in 1980, only tied one poll with Clark.

Instead of losing votes tied to the Dinsdale name, a suggestion raised early in his campaign, Clark added to traditional Tory support in the rich farming country of Manitoba's southwest.

Clark had 19,299 votes to Moore's 6,361. Mullally trailed with 5,405. In 1980, Dinsdale had 16,098 votes, Mullally, 51, was about 6,400 behind and the NDP trailed with a total of 8,509.

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Modified gating proposed

OTTAWA (CP) — Solicitor General Robert Kaplan is prepared to modify the prison "gating" amendments he introduced May 12 in hopes of getting passage before Parliament recesses for the summer, the Senate legal affairs committee was told Tuesday.

Deputy Solicitor General Fred Gibson told the committee that under the proposed changes, a decision on gating — arresting prisoners leaving jail under mandatory supervision — would be made by a provincial superior court rather than the National Parole Board.

Under the law, prisoners must be released under supervision to serve the last third of their sentences on the street.

The parole board began arresting prisoners at the prison gate last September to prevent release under mandatory supervision of those it felt were dangerous to society.

The Supreme Court of Canada ruled recently that the board can't legally gate prisoners.

110 DOWN IN 20 YEARS

Fighter's record 'good'

by JOHN FERGUSON
Southam News

OTTAWA — Defence Minister Gilles Lamontagne made the Commons laugh Tuesday when he claimed the CF-104 Starfighter "has a very good safety record" despite the loss of 110 of the aircraft in the last 20 years without ever having seen battle.

"It is part of the ups and downs of a warplane because they have to exercise," Lamontagne said to opposition hoots and guffaws as he rhymed off the accident figures.

"In some years, like 1972, we lost none," he said. "In 1965, we lost 12."

NDP defence critic Ray Skelly, prompted by the weekend crash of a CF-104 at a West German air show which killed five civilians, urged

Lamontagne to ground the planes pending a full investigation. Skelly said they should not be allowed to fly around built-up areas such as Winnipeg and Vancouver where many people could be put at risk by another crash.

But Lamontagne said investigations of each of the crashes dating back to 1961 had turned up a variety of reasons for the accidents, including pilot error, equipment failure and weather. There was no evidence of a flaw in the aircraft itself.

"If there was any unreasonable risk to let our pilots fly any of our planes I would stop them from flying right away," he said. "We are checking everything we can to make sure that the planes we are flying and still have good safety re-

cords can be flown in safety and can help our allies."

Tory Allan McKinnon, former defence minister in the Clark government, said that for Lamontagne to claim the 104 has a good safety record brought his answers "to a new level of unlikely."

Canada purchased 239 of the CF-104s from 1961 onwards. They were built by Canadair of Montreal under licence from the Lockheed corporation. The first one crashed that year and 109 others have been lost since. Four have crashed in the last six months including two over Northern Alberta last December, killing two pilots and one last week near the Cold Lake, Alta., airbase, which killed another pilot.

Three squadrons of the Starfighters are based in West Germany and they are not scheduled to be replaced until late in the 1980s by the new CF-18 fighter.

Although pilot error and weather have been cited in a large number of the crashes, critics say danger arises because the planes were designed as high-level interceptors but now are being used in a low-level, close-support role.

Described in defence

department background material as "a missile with a man in it," the plane can fly up to 2,400 kmh and such speeds at low levels leave no room for error.

The plane is also flown by the West German and Italian air forces, which have also experienced serious accident rates, and the plane has been dubbed "the widow-maker" by pilots.

Lamontagne said when the Canadian accident rate was compared with West German and other armed forces that fly the plane "our record can match both records as being a good safety record as far as a war plane is concerned."

"I'm not talking about commercial safety regulations," he said. "I'm talking about war plane safety."

"It's a war plane which has to be exercised in very difficult situations."

The defence department gave the following details on the number of crashes of the CF-104: 1961, one; 1962, three; 1963, eight; 1964, nine; 1965, twelve; 1966, five; 1967, eight; 1968, eight; 1969, nine; 1970, seven; 1971, five; 1972, none; 1973, five; 1974, five; 1975, two; 1976, one; 1977, three; 1978, three; 1979, one; 1980, three; 1981, three; 1982, six.

SOME 'HAVE TALKED'

'Get Clark' plot denied

OTTAWA (CP) — Joe Clark's opponents have discussed a number of possible scenarios for next month's Tory leadership convention, "but I don't think any concrete deal has been made," candidate Peter Pocklington said Tuesday.

Pocklington refused to say whether any tentative deals have been made or which candidates have been involved or represented in discussions.

"Shall we say that we've all talked to one another. That goes on in every campaign, but I don't think any concrete deal has been made."

Pocklington, interviewed by telephone from Edmonton, declined to comment on a CBC television report that Montreal candidate Brian Mulroney was trying to put together an alliance to stop Clark.

Mulroney has called the story "a total fabrication from beginning to end." He has promised to take "appropriate legal action" against the network and reporter Mike Duffy.

The story was also denied Tuesday by former finance minister John Crosbie, one of the candidates said to have been approached to participate in the stop-Clark coalition.

Meanwhile, an organizer for Toronto MP Michael Wilson confirmed that Mulroney tried unsuccessfully to contact Wilson by phone last weekend, but could not say the purpose of the call.

Pocklington wouldn't say whether Mulroney has contacted him about an alliance but said he hasn't spoken to him lately.

"No comment. I suppose if I said yes, on go the stories. If I say no, on go the stories anyway. It's a private matter, I think, if someone makes a call to someone else."

There is always backroom planning, he said. But "obviously if I'm going to make a deal with someone else it's going to be to my benefit, not his" and will depend "on who offers the best deal."

Pocklington doubted there was much truth to the story "that Brian is trying to arrange everybody to follow him, because I don't think anybody would."

"Why would they bother if they were ahead of him?"

Michael Perik, campaign manager for Wilson, said Mulroney attempted to reach Wilson on Sunday but was unsuccessful. The call was made by a Mulroney staffer to Wilson's wife, Margaret, in Ottawa, but Perik said he didn't know what Mulroney wanted.

Mulroney spokesman Michel Cogger could not be reached for comment.

John Laschinger, campaign manager for Crosbie, said all candidates are keeping the lines of communication open, but there have been no deals, "certainly not involving John," and he doubted there would be.

More help for poor wanted

OTTAWA (CP) — The federal government is more interested in spending money on Crown corporations than helping the poorest senior citizens, Progressive Conservative social affairs critic Flora MacDonald said Tuesday.

Half a million pensioners are living below the poverty line and could make good use of the money recently earmarked for two federally-owned aircraft companies, she told the Commons.

Last week, the Liberals added \$240 million to the budget of Canadair Ltd. and set aside another \$60 million for de Havilland Aircraft of Canada Ltd.

The total of \$300 million is exactly the same amount sought by Welfare Minister Monique Begin to raise the federal guaranteed income supplement for single pensioners in need.

In an interview, MacDonald said it's clear Begin is the only minister left who is prepared to go to bat for better social programs.

MacDonald said Finance Minister Marc Lalonde, External Affairs Minister Allan MacEachen and others who once lobbied for more social spending now are lobbying instead for spending on economic development.

"There's no question that economic development is important, but we cannot accept people living forever in appalling circumstances."

MacDonald's remarks were prompted partly by new spending estimates for the aircraft companies and partly by the National Council of Welfare's publication of poverty lines for 1983 Friday.

The council's report makes it clear, she said, that single people who get virtually all their incomes from the federal old-age security pension and guaranteed income supplement could still wind up \$2,000 or more a year below the poverty line.

Lalonde told MPs the extra \$300 million for the two aircraft firms this year would protect thousands of jobs. The extra \$300 million for poor pensioners is still in the works, but he said that expense is one that will recur year after year once it goes into effect.

Begin was not in the Commons during the exchange between MacDonald and Lalonde, but she told a reporter later that cabinet had to strike a balance between jobs and more money for pensioners.

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Metric commission will be disbanded

OTTAWA (CP) — The Metric Commission of Canada will be disbanded, Consumer and Corporate Affairs Minister Andre Ouellet confirmed Tuesday.

However, he did not tell the Commons when the agency will complete its job of switching 104 sectors of the economy to metric from imperial measures.

Some departmental officials had speculated earlier the commission would wind up operations next year.

At the retail level, use of the metric system is compulsory for three types of goods — gasoline, groceries and home furnishings.

The power of the cabinet to make use of the metric system mandatory is being challenged in the courts by some Toronto businessmen.

SUPPORTERS DISAPPOINTED

Crown's abortion defence criticized

WINNIPEG (CP) — Manitoba groups supporting abortion said Tuesday they aren't happy with the Crown's defence of Canada's abortion laws in a Regina court.

Anti-abortion crusader Joe Borowski of Winnipeg launched the court challenge of Canada's abortion laws hoping to strike down a 1969 amendment allowing abortions under strict conditions.

Borowski is fighting the battle on the grounds that a constitutional provision guaranteeing an individual's right to life includes the fetus.

The case began last week in Saskatchewan Court of Queen's Bench but, after more than a week of testimony, only witnesses supporting the anti-abortion side have been heard.

The Crown, representing the federal government in the case, has said the issue is strictly one of legal interpretation and defence witnesses are not needed.

However, Ellen Kruger, chairman of the Coalition for Reproductive Choice in Manitoba, said she's disappointed that Ottawa hasn't "ardently defended the federal law."

"We believe the federal law in itself is inadequate," she said in an interview. "We'd at least like to see an adequate defence made in Regina of that law."

Borowski's attorneys have used medical witnesses who have testified the fetus is an individual. Kruger claims the Crown's cross-examination of the witnesses has been inadequate.

She said it appears the federal Justice Department hasn't made much of an effort to defend its own laws.

"The Canadian Abortion Rights Action League certainly made a lot of representations to the federal government before the case began, asking for assurances the law would be defended," she said.

"They were given no such assurances."

Kruger, one of the most vocal proponents of a controversial Winnipeg abortion clinic set up by Dr. Henry Morgentaler of Montreal on May 6, said her group plans to launch court action to prove Canada's Constitution guarantees a woman's right to abortion.

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