

Solicitor General denied "inappropriate conversation" about APEC inquiry

BY ALEX BUTOS

OTTAWA (CUP)--Federal opposition parties demanded the resignation of Solicitor General Andy Scott Tuesday for allegedly pre-judging an RCMP inquiry investigating police actions at last year's Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation conference.

The demands came a day after Dick Proctor, a New Democrat member of parliament, said he overheard a conversation between Scott and another passenger aboard an Air Canada flight to Fredericton on October 1.

Proctor, who was sitting two seats away in the same row as Scott, took notes as he listened in on the conversation.

"[Scott] talked very openly about the APEC in-

quiry and he said that as far as he was concerned it would come out that there was excessive force used by four or five Mounties," he said last Monday.

"[Scott also] said, 'I'm the cover. I wanted to go to the world series in New York next week but I can't because I'm the cover.'"

When asked to interpret the meaning of the word "cover" Proctor said it meant Scott was protecting the prime minister from the RCMP public complaints commission.

Dozens of students were pepper sprayed, arrested without charge and had their protest banners confiscated during the APEC conference last November.

The alleged discussion on

the plane, the opposition charged, was proof Scott had prejudged the commission's results.

Scott has said publicly in recent weeks that people looking for answers about the treatment of protesters at the summit should wait and see what the inquiry concludes.

When asked to respond to the allegations on Monday, Scott told the House he couldn't recall who he spoke to on the flight or if they discussed the APEC affair.

Outside the House, Scott also said Monday he would have to consider quitting if Proctor's story was confirmed, the Globe and Mail reports.

But on Tuesday, Scott told the House he recalled talking to lawyer and Liberal Party

supporter Frederick Toole on the Fredericton-bound flight.

He said he discussed APEC with Toole but didn't engage in "an inappropriate conversation that in any way would prejudice the outcome of the [public complaints commission] inquiry."

The opposition wasted no time in rejecting Scott's assurances.

"How is it that the solicitor general could not recall any of the conversation yesterday, but today has total recall of that same conversation," said Reform Leader Preston Manning.

Moments later, Reform member of parliament Deborah Gray demanded that Scott step down.

"Great Scott, we have gone from 'I can't recall' to total recall, now to a rebuttal. When will we go to the resignation?" Gray asked.

The other opposition parties joined Reform's call for Scott's resignation.

"In light of this controversy, will the solicitor general now show some integrity, take responsibility for his actions and resign immediately?" asked Progressive Conservative member of parliament Peter MacKay.

Scott refused the calls to step down.

"As I said this morning, I said nothing that would interfere with the process of the [hearings] or with the outcome," he said.

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