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PRIVATE NOTICE QUESTIONS.

EXTRADITION OF FATHER PATRICK RYAN.

An Ceann Comhairle: I have had Private Notice Questions from a number of Deputies concerning matters appertaining to Father Patrick Ryan. I propose to call the Deputies in the order in which they submitted their questions to my office. I call therefore in the first instance Deputy Geraldine Kennedy.

Miss Kennedy: I regret, a Cheann Comhairle, that the comprehensive nature of my Private Notice Question had to be changed.

Miss Kennedy asked the Minister for Justice if he will urgently make a statement on the warrants issued by the British Authorities for the extradition of Father Patrick Ryan and if the warrants will be executed?

Proinsias De Rossa asked the Minister for Justice if warrants seeking the extradition of Father Patrick Ryan have been received from the British Authorities; when the warrants were received; if it is intended to execute the warrants; if so the arrangements which are being made to have them served; and if will make a statement on the matter?

An Ceann Comhairle: The next question is in the names of Deputies Dick Spring and Mervyn Tylor and I now call Deputy Dick Spring.

Mr. Spring asked the Minister for Justice if a determination will be made in respect of the extradition warrants in the case of Father Patrick Ryan by the Attorney General as a matter of extreme urgency, in view of all the circumstances involved; in making his determination, the documentation which the Attorney General will have regard to; if the Attorney General's conclusions, together with his reasons for reaching those conclusions, will be made public; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

~~Deputy~~ Mr. Barry: asked the Minister for Justice if, as a matter of urgency he will make a statement on the warrants received for the Extradition of Father Patrick Ryan; and if it is intended to execute the warrants?

Minister for Justice (Mr. Collins): I propose to take the four Private Notice Questions together.

Miss Kennedy: I believe it is very important and in the interests of this country -

An Ceann Comhairle: This is Question Time. I have allowed the Deputy to put a question.

Miss Kennedy: I wish to ask the Minister to assure the House that the law will be allowed to take its full course, ~~xndd~~ in this case and that Father Ryan will be extradited if the Attorney General is satisfied that there is a sufficiency of evidence and that a charge for a specific offence will be preferred. I further wish to ask the Minister to inform the House if the warrants received by the Irish Authorities for the extradition of this person are identical to those preferred to the Belgian Authorities and whether any guarantees were given to the Belgian Authorities or Father Ryan or his legal representatives. Will the Minister also assure the House that the Attorney General will be free to exercise his discretion on the matter after this morning's Cabinet Meeting?

An Ceann Comhairle: The Chair has an obligation to dissuade Members from putting a series of questions of this kind in an omnibus form. It is not appropriate.

Mr. Collins: I have already explained in detail to the House the procedures that have to be followed by the Attorney General in dealing with this issue. The Deputy need have no fear whatsoever but that the law will be allowed to take its full course.

With regard to the warrants which were sent by the British Authorities and whether they were identical to the warrants sent to Belgium, I have not seen the warrants sent to Belgium, but I am given to understand that the charges on the warrants sent here are substantially the same as went before the Belgian Courts last week.

Proinsias De Rossa: Is it normal practice for the Garda Authorities to divulge the existence of warrants for the extradition of people from this State? Does the Minister consider that the disclosure of such information in fact alerts the people concerned who may be required to answer such charges and if he would dissuade whoever is responsible for announcing the existence of these warrants from doing so?

Mr. Collins: I am not aware that an announcement was made by the Garda as to the existence of the warrants.

Mr. Spring: Prior to Father Ryan's arrival from Belgium on a military plane had the Government to give an assurance to the Belgian Government that Father Ryan would not be handed over to military or other custody. Second, is the Attorney General expecting further documentation on this matter from the British Attorney General?

Mr. Collins: I am slow to answer the first question for one reason only and that is that it broadens the scope of the question which was put to me, but in this instance I feel I should tell Deputy Spring and the Members of the House that no assurances whatsoever were given by the Government to anybody, any Government or for that matter anybody else. With regard to the second part of Deputy Spring's question, as I have already said in my reply, the Attorney General has a job to do with regard to seeing what is involved and when he has a decision to announce, I am sure he will do so immediately.

Mr. Barry: Will the Minister comment on the fact that Members of Father Ryan's family are quoted as saying they have been given assurances by members of the Government that Father Ryan would not be extradited to Britain, if he was returned here. ^{this morning's} Would the Minister comment on newspaper reports that the Attorney General was briefing the Government - which would seem to me not to be conforming with the obligations of the Attorney General in the 1987 Act. There was a further report that the British Attorney General had been told by the Irish Attorney General that there was no problem with the warrants. I hope this will be taken on board.

An Ceann Comhairle: I hesitate to interrupt Deputy Barry, but Deputy Barry knows full well that quotations at Question Time are not in order.

Mr. Barry: Will this be brought to the notice of the British Authorities?

Mr. Collins: I refer Deputy Barry to my reply to the supplementary question raised by Deputy Spring on the question of assurances. The same answer applies to the section of Deputy Barry's supplementary question in this regard. With regard to the part of his supplementary question which deals with newspaper reports, and the Attorney General's role, again I feel I should repeat that the role of the Attorney General in instances such as this is clearly spelled out in statute and that role will be followed diligently by the Attorney General, and we would all want him to do so.

With regard to the final part, the Deputy should know full well that it never has been the practice to disclose the contents of discussions or what happens between people at Attorney General or at ministerial level if they have discussions on matters

of importance.

Mr. Barry: The media feel free to comment.

Mr. Collins: This case will be decided on facts and not on media reports whether they come from the British or the Irish Press.

Mr. Spring: I welcome that statement from the Minister. Given the purported statements of the British Government in the media, particularly today, have the Irish Government seen fit to send a message to London to confirm what the Minister has said to this House, that the decision will be made by the Attorney General on a judicial basis.

Mr. Collins: I have no doubt in my mind, and neither should any Member of the House, that the British Government are fully aware of the statutory role of the Irish Attorney General in this matter. I do not think it is necessary for me in the course of Supplementary Questions to reaffirm that role. This is provided for in the Statute Book and it will be fully fulfilled by the Irish Attorney General.

Mr. Barry: That would not appear to be the case from the media reports.

Mr. J. O'Keeffe: Today I had tabled a Private Notice Question, sir, on the imminent danger, in the absence of Government investment, of the collapse of the Swansea/Cork ferry.

Section K follows