

Inquiries of the Ministry

Minister of Justice made the following statement in the House, as reported at page 422 of *Hansard*:

It is my understanding that those detained have been given the right to contact parents and friends so that their whereabouts may be known. The Attorney General of Quebec made a statement this morning dealing with the right to counsel.

In view of the statement made by the Attorney General of Quebec yesterday that more than 300 of the persons detained are going to be held incommunicado and denied the right to counsel, may I ask the minister if he can clarify the situation inasmuch as he appears to be making one statement and the Attorney General of Quebec appears to be making a totally different statement?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I do not accept the premise upon which the hon. member concluded his question. I should like to table later in the day—I do not have it with me now—the press release or statement issued by the Attorney General of Quebec, if I have the permission of the House. The Prime Minister has a copy here which we can table so that it will be clear to the House what the Attorney General of Quebec actually did say. I would be glad to table that copy now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is this agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. member have a supplementary question?

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): I would like to go on if I may, Mr. Speaker, to answer the substance of the question of the hon. member.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, could this statement be made an appendix to *Hansard*?

Mr. Speaker: Is this agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

[*Editor's Note: For text of statement referred to above, see appendix.*]

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): With reference to the statement contained in the hon. member's question that those arrested were to be held incommunicado, I refer to the headline in this morning's *Globe and Mail*, "Choquette will detain prisoners at least 21 days incommunicado". I think I can say that that headline misrepresents the situation that exists.

The information I have, after conferring with the office of the Attorney General of Quebec this morning, is that 369 persons have been arrested under the regulations under the War Measures Act and that up until yesterday afternoon 55 of those arrested had been released. I also understand from the office of the Attorney General of Quebec that at least 48 more either have been or will be released today.

[Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands.)

It is true it was my understanding after discussions with Mr. Choquette that the Quebec government recognized that the arrested persons had the right to instruct counsel on their behalf, and I believe that arrangements either have been or are being made to permit this to be done. Mr. Choquette refers to that in the statement I just tabled. It is also my understanding from the press communiqué issued by Mr. Choquette that the police have already notified the families of those detained in any cases in which they were requested to do so.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): In view of the fact that the minister and the federal government drafted these regulations, not the Attorney General of Quebec, and the minister must therefore accept responsibility, is the minister now prepared to amend the regulations in order to assure the people of Canada that the persons now being detained or any persons who may be detained under these regulations will have the clear and undisputed right to legal counsel and to communication with their families?

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): What the government intends to do, Mr. Speaker, is to introduce legislation at an early date to replace the regulations. The Prime Minister wrote the leaders of the other parties, including the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands, asking for suggestions as to what should be included in the legislation. We would appreciate receiving a reply as early as possible so that we can proceed with this legislation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): A supplementary question.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member has a further supplementary following which I will recognize the hon. member for Egmont.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): The minister is quite right in stating that we received an invitation from the Prime Minister to submit our suggestions. We are in the process of doing so and he will have them either today or tomorrow. In view of the statement made by the Minister of Justice yesterday, as reported in this morning's paper and on television, that the present regulations will be transferred into a statute, I ask the minister, if that is the case, whether this means that the invitation for opposition parties to make suggestions is pure hypocrisy and a farce?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. That question, of course, cannot be allowed.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): I rise on a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The Minister of Justice on a question of privilege.