

Oral Questions

people should not be convicted before there is a full investigation. [English]

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Blais: Those are basic principles of Canadian justice and British justice.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the RCMP informed me that, in the light of the allegations inside and outside this House that were brought to its attention, it was reviewing the matter to see whether further investigation was warranted. I believe this is quite normal and proper for the RCMP, and it would be improper for me to interfere in the process by telling it what it should or should not do. I believe that in the interest of the basic principle of justice, I should let the RCMP do its job.

[English]

Mr. Nunziata: Mr. Speaker, what the Solicitor General is saying is that the RCMP is investigating in order to determine whether a full investigation is necessary. Of course a full investigation is necessary. If it were Joe Blow from Kokomo you would have a full investigation into these allegations.

The RCMP is looking into criminal activity. The Senate will be looking into the personal conduct of Senator Cogger. My question for the Prime Minister is this: Who will be looking into and investigating the conduct of his ministers and members of Parliament?

• (1450)

Would he not consider it appropriate in the circumstances to conduct a full investigation of conduct on the part of members of Parliament falling short of criminal activity?

[Translation]

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, I think it is important again to stress that every Canadian citizen has a duty to respect the RCMP's integrity. If the hon. member has any factual information, not mere allegations, he has a responsibility as has every other Member of Parliament to go to the RCMP, state his information, and let the RCMP proceed with its investigation. That is the proper way under the basic principles of justice in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I would like to return to the Minister of Energy. His responses have been very carefully crafted. I want to seek some clarification from him.

In the minister's discussions with the hon. member for Châteauguay, did he identify whether the member of Parliament was doing, as others do, that is, lobby to encourage a particular financial support for a firm which is considering locating or expanding in his own constituency? The question is, did he determine from the member that Senator Cogger had lobbied that member to encourage the member to lobby on behalf of the firm from which he had indirectly received fees?

Mr. Speaker: The question may be a very interesting one, but it is getting dangerously into the ground, and I think it may well be in the ground, where if this line of questioning is pursued and was answered the hon. member in question would probably have a right to at least raise a question of privilege in this House. It puts me in some considerable difficulty.

Perhaps I could help the hon. member for Kamloops. The implication of the question seems to me that the minister is to make some comment about what the member did or did not do and that, it seems to me, is getting dangerously into the question of the privilege of a private member.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Energy indicated that he had had conversations with the hon. member. I am simply asking if, in those conversations, he asked the hon. member whether he had been encouraged by Senator Cogger to do this lobbying?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member said earlier that I was choosing my words carefully. I am. I am choosing my words carefully not because I am trying to hide anything, but because I have always thought that in this House we were very conscious of the rights of individuals and that we did not try to throw out allegations which the person did not have a chance or a right to defend himself or herself against. That is the way I thought this place functioned.

Second, I spoke to the hon. member, as I have said in the House today and I have asked my department as well. In everything that I have been advised about there has been no indication of any type that any moneys were