

Privilege—Mr. Clark

with it, will be honest enough to say so and make a charge, as he so often calls upon us to do when we are trying to elicit information.

Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I just want to say a few words with regard to the question of privilege in the earlier motion that was passed, calling upon the House to use its full authority to investigate the matter and, I hope, the matter which Your Honour will investigate, raised by the Leader of the Opposition, and any other matters regarding bugging in this chamber and in the parliamentary precincts which might come to your attention, as requested by the Acting Prime Minister the other day, because I wish to put on the record very clearly, in case anyone is in doubt, that it is an immensely serious offence under the Criminal Code for people who are not authorized to have in their possession electronic surveillance devices, amounting to an indictable offence with a penalty of up to two years.

● (1512)

I hope, Mr. Speaker, in order to assist you and your officers in that investigation, that those finding or suspecting bugs will call upon Your Honour and leave them in place until such time as a proper investigation, with fingerprinting and otherwise, can be conducted so that any investigation you and your officers undertake will in no way be compromised.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, on the matter raised by the Leader of the Opposition, and on the particular comments of the hon. member for Central Nova who said that he was absolutely not involved in the placing of any bugging device in his office, of course I accept unequivocally his word on that. I have not, of course said that he had been involved. I said the inference might be that members of the other party, no one particular person, but the party itself—

Some hon. Members: Cheap.

Mr. Basford: No cheaper than saying the RCMP did it.

Mr. Trudeau: —the members of the other party, the Tory party, because they did resort to the hiring of private detectives, not only in this instance but in others, gives me some cause for suspicion. I would add that I have no evidence, any more than the hon. member for Central Nova had any evidence when he suspected this was done by the RCMP.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition has raised, by way of a question of privilege, the discovery of a device which he has described as that which would lead to a telephone in his office the capability of being used as a listening apparatus. Contributions have been made by the hon. member for Central Nova, the Attorney General, and the Prime Minister.

The responsibility for the security of these premises, the offices of members and the buildings, and the privileges that

[Mr. MacKay.]

we enjoy here is my own responsibility. Of course, several times in the past we have had occasion to re-examine our concept of security of the buildings and our approach to security. It has to be balanced, on the one hand, with the interest of the safety and privacy of members who occupy these buildings and attempt to do the very important work they have been assigned by their constituents. On the other hand is the desire to have free access to these buildings by the citizens of Canada and, of course, by the very many visitors we invite here. That balance is a delicate one indeed, one which we constantly try to adjust in order to achieve the maximum of both objectives.

The responsibility in this particular instance, the event raised and referred to by the hon. member for Central Nova on Monday, is mine. It was subsequently referred to by the Acting Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, in the hope that I would pursue that investigation.

The House should know that in pursuance of that obligation we asked for a preliminary investigation by my own security staff, the security staff of the House of Commons. That report arrived on my desk late yesterday. I turned it over to the hon. member for Central Nova as a preliminary analysis of the circumstances. I indicated that if we were to carry the matter further, to attempt to trace not only the circumstances of the finding or the location of this device but go beyond that to locate the source of it or to fix responsibility, that would be an investigative chore which is beyond the designed capability of the security staff of this House, and therefore I would await further advice from the hon. member.

Similarly, with respect to the point raised by the Leader of the Opposition, we have been carrying out sweeps or electronic examinations of other offices and have as yet made no discovery in any other office. We indicated we would carry out this examination of all offices requested by hon. members. It will probably take another two or three days to do that. We will likely want to assess that part of the investigation before going any further. However, with respect to the point raised by the Leader of the Opposition, we will certainly carry forward today a further examination of the nature of the device and see whether there is anything else we should do.

In the final analysis, we will come to a point that tests the limit of our capabilities, and surely it should be as an investigative job for our responsibility is really confined to these buildings. If we are going to go beyond that, we will have to call in the assistance of other security forces, and I think properly we ought to do that only at the request of members involved in a very direct way. This is simply by way of a preliminary or interim report on the progress of the investigations we are carrying out at this time.

Mr. Basford: On the question of privilege, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: The Attorney General on a fresh question of privilege.

Mr. Basford: No, Mr. Speaker, it is relative to the question of privilege we have been dealing with. I in no way want to