

question of privilege that the hon. Solicitor General (Mr. Blais) today refused to answer questions on the grounds of national security. The argument has been interesting, but it really has not addressed itself to that fundamental point. No one has alleged that the Solicitor General does not enjoy that right, and I would be most surprised if anyone did. I am prepared to hear from the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) and the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Leggatt), but I would ask them to confine themselves to the merits of that particular point.

Mr. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. MacEachen) in his comments certainly raised some questions here which you are going to have to ultimately decide, one of which he says is: what is the obligation of a member of parliament? Well, you are considering the question about what is an obligation of a member of parliament who is a minister.

There is a minister who says that on national security grounds and grounds that he deems to be national security—no other impartial body is yet to be asked to decide whether they are national security grounds or not—he does not have to answer any questions. That is what the minister says. The Deputy Prime Minister wants to know what is the obligation of an MP. As I see our obligation, the obligation of an MP is to do what he considers to be right for the country, based on the best advice he can get. It is not to bow down to the government.

When the government says, "This is a national security matter and therefore you are doing the wrong thing and we want to know the source of your information, you must give it to us because we, the government, say this is national security". I say "Who are you the government? You are the executive which, down through the centuries, has tyrannized the rest of the population whenever you have had the chance to do it. Your power is only fettered by the rights of members of parliament, and therefore I do not trust you. Whether it is you, an NDP executive, a PC executive or a Liberal executive, I do not trust you." I do not trust the executive, and I am never going to trust them. When a member of the executive says that a matter is a matter of national security, I say, prove it, go to some third party, go to a joint committee of the House which is seized of these matters. If that joint committee with members of both parties on it, says this is a matter of national security and that member X should do so and so, then I will be glad to do it. But I do not agree that I should do something because the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), or the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. MacEachen), or the Solicitor General (Mr. Blais) says it is a security matter.

● (1602)

Today we heard a remarkable proposition from the Deputy Prime Minister—one of the longest serving members in this House—that the right of national security is absolute with respect to members of parliament. He used the word "absolute". In effect, the Deputy Prime Minister says that when he decides it is a security matter, I have no rights vis-à-vis him.

Privilege—Mr. Jarvis

This is at least a dubious proposition that the Deputy Prime Minister has put forward. I say, if that is correct, we can wind up this parliament and forget it because, if that is the case, executive has an untrammelled power and authority based on national security.

The Deputy Prime Minister compared the case of the hon. member for Leeds (Mr. Cossitt) to that of the hon. member for Bonavista-Trinity-Conception (Mr. Rooney). They are in no way similar. The hon. member for Bonavista-Trinity-Conception has been charged with certain breaches of the Criminal Code in relation to his responsibilities as a member of the House, and the matter was handled quite properly. We all regret that it had to happen and that it did happen. But the cases are not the same. No charge is laid against the hon. member for Leeds and, if there are charges, they will not be laid under the Criminal Code because of some personal dereliction of his but because of a disagreement about what is in the interests of this country and what is a genuine breach of national security. So the cases are not similar.

In the case of the hon. member for Bonavista-Trinity-Conception, was the CTV network raided by the RCMP, was the Global network raided, and were newsmen dragooned to interrogate them throughout the week end? Nothing like that was done, so we are not dealing with a similar case. What we are dealing with now is an organized attempt by the government to put fear into the media and into the opposition parties as an election looms on the horizon.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crosbie: That is all it is. If another proposition of the Deputy Prime Minister is correct that we only have the same rights and responsibilities as an ordinary citizen, why were we elected in the first place? If my rights and responsibilities are exactly the same as those of anyone else in Canada, why am I a member? This is a new doctrine. We are supposed to have certain rights and duties that are different from those of the ordinary citizens.

The Deputy Prime Minister said that the public is watching the hon. member for Leeds to see if he is prosecuted. That is what in effect he said. I say, yes, you are a good one to give us that example. They were watching also to see if the former solicitor general was prosecuted, but he was not, and for the most part everybody is agreed that in the circumstances he should not have been. But let it not be said that the former solicitor general was treated exactly the same as any member of the general public would have been treated. We all know that is not the case.

Mr. Andras: He co-operated with the police.

Mr. Crosbie: Do not give us that applesauce that everyone is watching the hon. member for Leeds and that he is somehow different. Do not try to bluff us with your talk of national security.

Is it not peculiar, Mr. Speaker, that the government have been saying for 18 months that they know nothing about