

Privilege—Mr. Jarvis

● (1552)

I would appeal to hon. members opposite not to try to make politics on security and to attack the government every day on a question of privilege. I have resisted getting into this question of privilege earlier. Today I want to remind hon. members opposite that no matter how much smoke they put forward in these debates there is still one question that they must answer within their heart of hearts and that is what is the responsibility of a member of parliament when he is asked to co-operate with the chief of the security service of Canada, the assistant commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police? Has he any obligation to co-operate?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, I too have resisted getting involved in this particular debate. I believe, sir, that there are some legitimate questions raised by my colleagues with respect to points of privilege concerning the Solicitor General's approach to answering questions in the question period. It amazes me greatly to see the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. MacEachen) get up and, under the guise of discussing this whole matter, deal in a political and most shameful way with respect to a very serious matter. It is a grave dereliction in the carrying out of the responsibilities of one of his colleagues in cabinet, namely, the Solicitor General (Mr. Blais).

The point which was raised initially was whether or not the Solicitor General can come into this House and adopt a position with respect to his refusal absolutely to answer any questions and to give notice to this House that he will not answer any questions respecting matters under his specific jurisdiction. I believe that is the point originally raised and it is the one to which I wish to address myself.

We have had some developments, and the genesis of this is rather interesting. We have had the complete and absolute ineptitude on the part of the Solicitor General by bringing in a senior law officer on the premises of parliament without the consent of the Speaker of this House, who is after all the person to whom all these requests should be made. Whether it is a request for co-operation or an attempt to intimidate a member of parliament there are a number of alternatives that can be taken by the police, including incarceration, charges, and search warrants. That particular tactic and the ineptitude shown indicated to me a "jackboot mentality" on the part of the Solicitor General and members of this government.

I want to say one other thing in support of the position taken because it is important to understand the background of the situation. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) rose in the House and delivered a long, prepared speech. It was typed because I saw it across the aisle. He appeared to be dealing extemporaneously with this matter as if he had come in to the House and taken copious notes. Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister in the course of that long dissertation put a certain member of parliament not only on trial but he convicted and sentenced that member of parliament by his speech. The Prime Minister has offended every principle of civil liberty by that

[Mr. MacEachen.]

outrageous speech which he made where there have not been any particular charges laid, just simply allegations stated under the aegis of the Official Secrets Act in this House.

Any of us who have looked at that particular piece of legislation know that definition of national security is a discretionary matter subject to considerable judicial review. The Prime Minister made a presentation to this House which tended to cast innuendo and slurs upon a man who represents a constituency, and thus constitutes a threat to the Prime Minister. With the Prime Minister setting that kind of background, the Solicitor General comes into this House and, after he indicated the first time around that he was not going to answer any questions on the topic of the investigation now under consideration by Mr. Justice McDonald, he has now in effect done the same thing with respect to this aspect of his responsibilities. What he is doing is giving notice to you, sir, and to the rest of the hon. members of this House that as far as any aspect of any investigation which can be remotely termed, in his opinion, national security, he is simply not going to answer. Rather he will stand in his place, as he did today in a rather contemptible position of snickering and taking rather cheap shots.

In this particular case we have serious allegations made against a member of parliament which are continuing to be carried on by the Deputy Prime Minister. An answer has been given in this House by that member to the specific request made by the Solicitor General apparently in consultation with his chief law enforcement officer in that area. Now we have the spectacle of him trying to perpetuate the allegation after an answer has been made in this House without the basis of any charge having been laid, just merely on the basis of allegations such as have been made by the Deputy Prime Minister today.

The reason I support the position taken by the hon. member for Perth-Wilmot (Mr. Jarvis) is that initially the Solicitor General gave notice to you, Mr. Speaker, that he would refuse to answer any questions, and it seems to me the basis of your decision and observation when the matter was first brought up was that one would have to consider the answers given from time to time in response to specific questions. But I suggest to you, sir, that the Solicitor General has indeed indicated that he is refusing to come into this House to answer any questions. He has given us a blanket assurance time and time again. This bears on the whole concept of ministerial responsibility; it bears on the whole basis of your observations, as pointed out by the House leader on this side, the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker).

We have the continuing threat and intimidation by the Deputy Prime Minister who says, "This is not going to end". We have the intimidation that has been practiced on a member of this House, an answer given, yet the continuation of intimidation by the fact that the Solicitor General continues to refuse to answer any questions in dereliction of the responsibility of that portfolio.

Mr. Speaker: I see two other hon. members who want to join in the debate. We began with the proposition that it was a