

*Oral Questions*

this important matter in the House this afternoon. According to the statement made by the present Solicitor General, when the former solicitor general, the present Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, informed the Prime Minister a year ago March about the RCMP break-in in Montreal and also about the decision which was made presumably not to acknowledge the letter which was sent to the present Minister of Supply and Service at about the time of the break-in, did the Prime Minister have a conversation with the present Minister of Supply and Services to determine what kind of specific action he took at that time and to give a full explanation for his behaviour?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, my dismay in March of last year was that indeed the RCMP had been involved in an illegal break-in. It was at that time that the former solicitor general, the present Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and myself discussed the possibility of an inquiry. At that time we recognized that the matter had been stated publicly in Montreal and that the attorney general of the province of Quebec was on the eve of launching an inquiry. Because of that, Mr. Speaker, the former solicitor general, the present minister of Indian affairs and myself, decided, in the presence of our senior advisers including the RCMP, to wait until the judicial process had followed its course before going into the matter any further.

● (1430)

As to the precise date at which I asked the then Solicitor General, the present Minister of Supply and Services, the details about which the hon. member asks, I cannot give the answer to that. I will try to refresh my memory as to the time at which I spoke to the former solicitor general.

**Mr. Broadbent:** Mr. Speaker, since it is a clear possibility even now, I understand, that a federal cabinet minister might not appear before such an inquiry as is now underway in the province of Quebec, and since certainly the kind of inquiry which the government of Quebec might initiate into this process was clear even last year, does the Prime Minister not think that his own responsibilities were not lived up to by relying on the strict application in this case of the due process of law when, instead, he should have gone to the man who was the solicitor general at the time to find out from him if he had inquired of the RCMP when he met with the commissioner of the RCMP on November 6 if the RCMP was directly involved? Surely, it was the ministerial responsibility at that time for the minister to have asked that straightforward, and, one is tempted to say, pretty banal question that we know the Minister of Supply and Services did not ask. The question I want to ask the Prime Minister is, why he did not pursue the matter with the former solicitor general a year ago instead of leaving it simply to a legal process in the province of Quebec which might not ever have led to an interrogation of the minister concerned?

**Mr. Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, I repeat that I cannot give the exact moment when I spoke to the Minister of Supply and

[Mr. Broadbent.]

Services, but the relevant fact in the spring of last year was that the RCMP had been involved in an illegal break-in, and that itself was the main object of my concern and that of the Solicitor General. It is on that basis that we discussed whether or not we should have a judicial inquiry. I repeat that we waited until the due process of law would follow its course, at which time we would see if the guilty persons were brought to trial, as they were. That is the essence of my involvement at that time.

**Mr. Broadbent:** I would say with regret that the Prime Minister is apparently missing the question I am asking. I am not asking about a judicial inquiry. I am asking about the very important matter of ministerial responsibility involving possibly in this case conspiracy to interfere with the due process of law.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister now, in terms of the statement that was made by the present Solicitor General in the House on Friday in which it became clear for the first time that the former solicitor general, the present Minister of Supply and Services, when he was the minister responsible did not at the meeting on November 6, 1972 even ask the commissioner of the RCMP if the RCMP was involved in the break-in, whether the Prime Minister believes that a minister who in such a grave situation does not even ask the most straightforward and relevant questions—perhaps because he does not want to be caught knowing the answer—ought to remain a minister of the Crown?

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, the minister in question was moved from that portfolio around the time that this knowledge came to his attention.

**An hon. Member:** After the break-in.

**An hon. Member:** Now, we know the reason.

**Mr. Trudeau:** The relevant point, I reassert to the House, is that the then solicitor general was not apprised of the break-in before it happened nor after it happened by the RCMP.

**Mr. Broadbent:** He did not ask about it.

**Mr. Trudeau:** The minister did not ask about it. He was moved to another portfolio within weeks after his meeting with the RCMP.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**An hon. Member:** Why?

**Mr. Trudeau:** The serious matter of the RCMP having broken in was not known to him. Friday was not the first time when hon. members heard that. We have been saying in the House for several weeks now that, of course, the former solicitor general knew there was a break-in. There had been a telegram complaining about it. He did not know that his own police force was involved in the break-in, and we have his word