

certain automobile with Mr. Warren Hart. So there do seem to be things that have to be cleared up. I think we need to know why the Solicitor General was advised to say one thing on one occasion, and now says that there is no record of any such surveillance. I come back to the main point: we need to have that cleared up, not for the sake of the good name of the RCMP or the good name of the Solicitor General. We need to have it cleared up because a member of this House has had his position impaired. That is one aspect that needs to be considered.

The other aspect that needs to be considered is the question of Mr. Hart's affidavit, his assertion that in a car, along with the hon. member for Nickel Belt and Mr. Rosie Douglas, he recorded certain conversations. As I said, all of that is before us in the form of a sworn affidavit. My insistence is that the issue is not how the RCMP acts or how Mr. Hart acts. The issue with which Your Honour should be concerned and with which we should be concerned is with regard to a member of the House. Has he been molested outside the House—to use some of the language in the book—has he been interfered with, or has his position as a member of parliament been impaired? It seems to me that it has, and on that basis Your Honour should rule that there is a prima facie case of privilege and allow the motion to be put. If you do that, I certainly will be happy to second the motion and, if Your Honour puts the motion, I hope the House will agree to it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Pinard (Parliamentary Secretary to President of Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) mentions is a matter of fact, and in support of his statement he invokes the affidavit of an individual known as Hart. Running counter to his statement, that fact, we have the categorical, clear, specific and non-equivocal version of the Solicitor General of Canada (Mr. Blais) who formally denies the assertion of the hon. member for Nickel Belt. As Speaker of this House, you are therefore up against the fact that there are two absolutely contradictory versions. After looking into the procedural aspect of the situation and consulting Beauchesne on the matter, I respectfully suggest that this cannot be considered a matter of privilege. Beauchesne, on page 102 citation 113, edicts clearly as follows, and I quote:

But a dispute arising between two members, as to allegations of facts, does not fulfill the conditions of parliamentary privilege.

In addition, I have often heard you say in this House, Mr. Speaker, that when opinions differ on facts, the question of privilege cannot be invoked, and you turned them down accordingly. At this time Mr. Speaker, there is a motion before the House and I maintain respectfully that this institution is being abused by a deliberate attempt to nourish an atmosphere of suspicion with regard to the RCMP. What the hon. member for Nickel Belt is suggesting, and what comes out of the argument of all hon. members who rose in support of the motion of the hon. member for Nickel Belt is nothing

Privilege—Mr. Rodriguez

else but an attempt to undermine the credibility of the RCMP who, in the present case, assured the Solicitor General of Canada that the hon. member for Nickel Belt has not been subjected to electronic surveillance. So if the members of all opposition parties want to use this institution to move a motion with the obvious intention of blaming the RCMP, we on this side of the House are not prepared, Mr. Speaker, to take advantage of this situation to abuse this House and blame the RCMP. Furthermore, this is obviously a lack of respect for an institution established under federal legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the MacDonald Commission has been established to inquire into a number of facts related to the RCMP. The question raised by the member for Nickel Belt will be examined by the MacDonald Commission. Why should we approve this overlapping and force a House committee to play the political game of the opposition and investigate facts that are categorically denied by the police and by the Solicitor General of Canada?

Mr. Speaker, maybe because I talked too fast the hon. gentleman could not catch the translation of what I said, but if he would just take the trouble to listen, I am sure he will bow to common sense. A federal body, established by a law of Parliament and, as such, entitled to our respect, will investigate the very matter raised by the member for Nickel Belt. Given the circumstances, and pursuant to section 4 of the Inquiries Act, which the Leader of the Opposition can very well read, the commissioners are granted the authority and the privilege to interrogate even ministers. This should take care of his objection. The investigation will be thorough, but meanwhile this motion on a question of privilege is contrary to the rules of this House. It is a question of conflicting facts, of differences of opinion, but not a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

● (1542)

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would like to hold the matter under consideration. There has been a considerable amount of argument put forward this afternoon to the effect that, in order to support the motion of privilege by the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez), it is necessary to discredit the Solicitor General (Mr. Blais) and the RCMP, and I think I ought to disabuse the House of that proposition.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: It seems to me that the situation is such that the hon. member for Nickel Belt—and I will have to examine the transcript—began by saying he had assurances from the Solicitor General, which he accepts—the Solicitor General had put them in writing—that certain facts were true. Again I say I will have to examine the transcript. I do not want to put words into the mouths of those who have argued, but I think we have to examine two things.