

made very clear in the transcript, within the meaning of the definition of "intercept"—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I caution the Hon. Member for York Centre that his questions should be put to Ministers with regard to ministerial accountability. Questions put with regard to what a Minister said in an interview are really not in order, and I think the Hon. Member knows it.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Hon. Member is an experienced Member and knows that. Therefore, his question, please.

Mr. Kaplan: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Prime Minister as to the standard of integrity which is to be permitted in his Cabinet, does he deny the statement? Does he disagree? Does he challenge the statement made in this transcript by the Deputy Prime Minister that he was listening to—"I was hearing and I was hearing every word that was spoken"—the caucus while it was going on, and that that is within the meaning of "intercept" in the Criminal Code?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, that is an interpretation that my hon. friend places on a construction of events. The Deputy Prime Minister has indicated that the incident which transpired was one in which he was entirely blameless with regard to the initiation thereof or any responsibility flowing therefrom, on the one hand. Second, with regard to the point raised by my hon. friend regarding a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, it is true, and I indicated it earlier, that the timeliness of this is not affected by the passage of time, but in the case of the member of the RCMP a charge was laid. If my hon. friend feels that something is illegal, he ought to lay a charge and assume the consequences.

MINISTERIAL STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, let me simply ask the Prime Minister this. Is it acceptable today among his Ministers for them to intercept, that is, to listen to discussions which are going on in the Liberal caucus or in the NDP caucus? Is that an acceptable standard of behaviour today for his Ministers?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I don't read anybody else's mail, I don't open brown envelopes, nor do I make unsubstantiated allegations against people without having the courage to stand up and put my seat on the line.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre.

Oral Questions

● (1440)

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Mike Cassidy (Ottawa Centre): My question is directed to the Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker. Am I to understand that the Government's position is that deliberate electronic surveillance of what is going on in the caucus of another political party in Parliament would be immoral and illegal, but if thanks to an electronic accident, the Government happened to have access to what was being said in another caucus, it would be all right to go on eavesdropping? Is that the Government's position?

[English]

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. I know the Hon. Member believes seriously in his point, but it is now clearly entering into the realm of the hypothetical, beyond the realm of ministerial accountability, and into something that is between the Parties.

Does the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre have a question he wishes to put with regard to a Minister or to a matter that is under that Minister's jurisdiction?

[Translation]

REQUEST FOR RESIGNATION OF DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Mike Cassidy (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question will be very simple, since the Deputy Prime Minister has admitted that in the past he listened to the caucus meetings without letting the other caucus groups know. Does the Prime Minister intend to ask for the Deputy Prime Minister's resignation, pending an investigation of this matter before the House?

[English]

Mr. Speaker: The question is hypothetical. It has already been asked two or three times today. I am therefore going to rule it out of order. The Hon. Member for Cochrane-Superior.

REQUEST FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE ON PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane-Superior): I think the Prime Minister must feel, as all Members do, that there has been a shadow cast across Parliament today. I would like to ask him would he be prepared now to have this entire matter referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections so that the air can be cleared and we can know exactly whether there is any ground at all for charges or for the call of the opposition Parties for a resignation.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, in regard to the allegation, it has been denied by the Deputy Prime Minister. No charge has been laid. Therefore the matter is in the process of being resolved by the House.