

PRIVACY

INQUIRY AS TO POSSIBLE TAPE-RECORDING OF CONVERSATIONS IN PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

Mr. Stuart Leggatt (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. In view of the report that President Nixon's conversations in his two White House offices during the past two years were tape-recorded, will the Prime Minister assure the House that meetings taking place in his office, either with domestic or foreign visitors, are not being tape-recorded?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

DISPOSITION OF TAPE-RECORDINGS OF CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN PRIME MINISTER AND PRESIDENT NIXON

Mr. Stuart Leggatt (New Westminster): I might say, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased with the reply. In view of the fact some of the conversations in the White House were between the Prime Minister and President Nixon, can the Prime Minister advise the House if he has been supplied with tape-recordings of those conversations?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me the question is making light of a very important subject. This government takes the position that it is very important; that is why we have introduced legislation to that effect in this House.

Mr. Leggatt: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to indicate that the questions was not asked facetiously. There is a bill presently under consideration by this House. This is a matter of some importance to the House.

[Later:]

KNOWLEDGE OF PRIME MINISTER OF TAPING PROCEDURES OF PRESIDENT NIXON—REQUEST FOR TRANSCRIPTS OF TAPES

Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct my question to the Prime Minister. Did the Prime Minister have any knowledge that his conversations in the oval room and the hideaway office with President Nixon were being taped when he was there on December 6, 1971?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I had no knowledge then, and I have no knowledge now, that they were taped.

Mr. Lawrence: In view of press reports which clearly indicate the tape-recorders were not turned off when the Prime Minister was there, and in view of the fact that it is now within his knowledge, will the Prime Minister take steps to get transcripts of those tapes from the White House administration?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, when I talk in confidence to a head of another government, I operate under the presumption the conversations are private and privileged. I still maintain that presumption.

26446—70

Oral Questions

Mr. Lawrence: When it is obvious that these tapes are going to be produced to a legislative body of another jurisdiction, does the Prime Minister not feel we have the right to compare the tapes—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

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[Translation]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

KILLING OF TWO CANADIAN GIRLS VISITING VICTORIA FALLS—SUGGESTION THAT STANDING COMMITTEE INVESTIGATE

Mr. Gilbert Rondeau (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs.

Since there is a lot of confusion in the statements made by the Zambian government following the assassination of the two Canadian girls, does the hon. minister intend to send members from the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence to conduct an inquiry in Zambia in order that we know once and for all the truth about that tragedy?

[English]

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the answer is no. I do not think we would welcome a group of parliamentarians from Zambia investigating a matter of that kind in Canada.

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INQUIRY OF THE MINISTRY

Mr. J. R. Ellis (Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Transport. It has to do with conflict of interest. In light of allegations made by the Centre for Public Interest Law that an overly cozy relationship exists, with the president of Bell Canada sitting on the five-man salary board of the Canadian Transport Commission, will the minister explain how this can possibly be condoned and whether it will continue?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I again have serious doubts about a question asked in those terms. The hon. member might like to seek his information in a regular way. It is debate to ask how a situation can be condoned or condemned. That is not a proper question.

Mr. Ellis: May I rephrase my question and ask whether the minister feels there is a conflict of interest involved?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.