

the Crown. That is the position of the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Goyer) today. He should at least be asked whether he is prepared to answer questions if they are put to him. If not that, he should be asked whether he is prepared to make statements on motions and have questions thereon. If he does not at least raise a question of privilege on what has been said about him today, he is not much of a man.

● (1510)

**Mr. Paproski:** And he should resign.

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

**Mr. McGrath:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. I was very careful on my supplementary question, anticipating what Your Honour's ruling might be, to base my supplementary question on a statement issued by the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Goyer) on June 2, 1977, on his letterhead, in relation to the matter which is under discussion in the House at the present time.

I would like to submit in argument that, notwithstanding the citation in *Beauchesne 171(X)*, which I know Your Honour will cite, I would draw Your Honour's attention to our own Standing Order 39(5) which states that oral questions may be directed to ministers of the Crown.

In reading the spirit if not the letter of the standing order, I would hold respectfully that a minister making a statement outside the House on his authority as a minister, in this case on his authority as Minister of Supply and Services, on his official letterhead, is under our rules accountable for that statement in the House.

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

**Mr. McGrath:** Your Honour shakes his head skeptically. I would submit that if the Minister of Supply and Services had not made that statement on June 2, I would be on very weak ground indeed. If Your Honour rules today that ministers who make official statements outside the House on their official letterhead are not to be held accountable to the House for those statements, that ruling will go a long way toward destroying what little accountability there is left in this House.

**Mr. Alexander:** Mr. Speaker, I will not be very long. As I listened to the House leader, I thought he brought home the point I tried to make in terms of questions I tried to ask the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Goyer). I recall very distinctly Your Honour's ruling on March 14, 1975. I recall you stating that if a minister were asked a question about a former responsibility, he did not have to answer that question. However, if he were asked a question regarding his former responsibilities, and if he wanted to answer that question, Your Honour would not prevent him from doing so.

I prefaced my remarks extremely carefully because I know this has been a very heated afternoon. There have been many innuendos and aspersions cast. Following Your Honour's ruling, I put the question to the minister. I thought he would say either yes or no. I was not going to get into anything

### *Oral Questions*

substantive, just give him the privilege or the right to have something to say, whether it be yes or no.

What disturbs me is when I asked the minister that question, I did not know whether he was going to answer or not. I did not know whether the minister was going to say yes, he would be prepared to answer questions with respect to his former responsibility as Solicitor General of Canada. When Your Honour stood up, there was great laughter from my friends on the other side, as usual when we are hitting home. We got the usual red herring.

With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, you must not only clear the right of hon. members to ask a similar question of ministers when they no longer hold portfolios for which they were responsible, but as well the question raised by the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), another very delicate one. That question was based on the fact that the Minister of Supply and Services wanted to become involved as a former solicitor general, using his own letterhead in order to bring about this particular scenario.

With all due respect—and Your Honour knows how well we get along together, I always try my best to abide by the rules of the House—these two questions as well as the question by the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Hnatyshyn) must be addressed by Your Honour. I hope that you do not intend to answer those questions this afternoon because what you decide will determine whether in fact this place can function as it should.

**Mr. Broadbent:** Mr. Speaker, in rising on this point of order I preface my comments by stating that I agree in substance with what has been said by the member who just resumed his seat. If we cannot get a clarification of this issue involving the integrity of a minister of the Crown with regard to very clear, explicit charges made both inside the House and out about conspiracy by leading officers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, then parliamentary democracy in Canada is in a very bad state. I say that in all seriousness.

I appeal through you, Mr. Speaker, to the government House leader and Acting Prime Minister (Mr. MacEachen), because the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) is absent, that in the event Your Honour's ruling should be negative that we hear the House leader's view on that before Your Honour makes the ruling. I appeal to the Acting Prime Minister to confer with the Prime Minister, who just left the chamber, to recognize the seriousness of the situation.

We have no opportunity of questioning the former solicitor general, the present Minister of Supply and Services, on a matter that involves conspiratorial accusations against the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and against the minister himself. The evidence does not warrant charges at this point of conspiracy of the minister. The evidence is unclear on that.

A lot of us are reluctant to impugn directly the integrity of the minister by saying there has been a conspiracy. That would be one way to get him to his feet, denouncing him and saying openly that he conspired. He would then have to justify it.