

**Mr. Trudeau:** I understand that the opposition would like us to take another position because that would justify their verbiage in the past hour and ten minutes. I was asked this question at a press conference in British Columbia on Friday afternoon. I gave the answer which hon. members are arguing should be the government's answer.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) wants me to come before the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections to find out what I think and so that I can clarify the situation. I would have clarified it at two o'clock if the opposition had not wanted to drag a red herring across the floor of the House of Commons.

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

**Mr. Trudeau:** I stand up now because I see other members of the opposition trying to catch your Honour's eye to carry on the debate. I think it is too bad that we have lost the question period once again as it might have settled this matter.

**An hon. Member:** We have not lost it.

**Mr. Trudeau:** That is true. According to Your Honour's ruling, the question period will take place after this matter has been debated. But some members of the government have other business and will have to leave.

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

**Mr. Trudeau:** Surely any reasonable person in the public would understand that it is not necessary for 20 or 25 ministers to be present—

**An hon. Member:** Thirty-four.

**Mr. Clark:** You cannot count them either.

**Mr. Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. Leader of the Opposition is so good at numbers he should count them and see if he can reach the number 34. There are not 34 ministers in the ministry and there are not 34 ministers in the House, any more than there are 34 in the front benches of the opposition!

I hope I made the position of the government very clear a moment ago as I think I made it very clear in answering a question from the press on Friday.

The opposition is reading from *Hansard* and is trying to get the Solicitor General in the position where he would have said something that he did not say. I suggest that the question is very clear on page 2511 of *Hansard*. The question put by the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Leggatt) reads as follows:

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Solicitor General to clarify his last answer. Is it his position that he will not be informing himself of anything that has occurred previously in his department, in order to advise this House concerning the political responsibility of the government? Is that precisely what the minister is telling the opposition today?

The Solicitor General answered:

Of course not, Mr. Speaker.

*Privilege—Answers of Solicitor General*

The opposition has been repeating for the past hour that the Solicitor General took a position in this House last week; he was asked specifically if that was his position, and he said, "No, Mr. Speaker." It is very clear that is not his position, that is not my position, and it is not the position of the government; so what is the argument all about, Mr. Speaker?

The argument arises because the Solicitor General—quite properly in my view—did not want to put himself in the position of having a day to day running commentary on the judgments of the royal commission on the testimony of witnesses before that commission and on the interpretation of the credibility or otherwise of those witnesses. Surely this is a tenable position.

If the government had not set up a royal commission I am quite sure we would, to this day, be hearing from the opposition that we should set up a royal commission, that the government cannot discharge its duties simply by answering questions in this House of Commons, that the government has a majority in the House of Commons and it will have a majority on any committee investigating this, and that therefore it cannot be trusted to have an inquiry and report on the past deeds or misdeeds of the RCMP. This was the position of the opposition. It was their position not only on the RCMP, it was their position before, whether we were talking about Hamilton Harbour, Sky Shops or anything else.

What happens now? We say that the opposition is right in this particular case, that we should set up a royal commission of inquiry. We set it up so that the opposition and the country will be sure it is not the government investigating itself and controlling that investigation with its majority. But what do we hear, particularly from the Leader of the Opposition, however? We hear that this royal commission is an emanation of the executive—those are his words—therefore implying it cannot be trusted. It is set up by the executive, it is named by the executive, the staff is instructed by the executive, and so on. Why, then, have they been asking us for so many years to set up royal commissions of inquiry if they are going to argue now that they cannot trust this royal commission? What is the point of asking for a royal commission if, in contempt of that royal commission, you attempt to discredit it?

I find it somewhat distressing and perhaps even shameful that the commentary from the opposition parties these past several months has led to the clear conclusion that one can and should trust the Keable commission in Quebec—that they are doing a good job—

**Mr. Clark:** Another red herring!

**Mr. Trudeau:** That the commission was set up by the government of Quebec, that it appointed a lawyer who was a former candidate of the Parti Québécois is completely irrelevant—it is a royal commission and therefore its proceedings should be watched with great respect, but the royal commission set up by this government headed by a Justice of the Supreme Court of Ontario—of Alberta, associated—

**An hon. Member:** Oh, oh!