

Oral Questions

Miss MacDonald: It is recorded at page 692 of *Hansard*, and it was in reference to excerpts from the *Charlatan* newspaper. In a transcript of her remarks the minister is recorded as saying, "There is no way somebody is going to tell me that as a Quebecer there was a state of national emergency somewhere in Quebec and some threats to God knows what". I would like to ask the Acting Prime Minister whether the Minister of National Health and Welfare was stating government policy when she made that statement?

Miss Bégin: I never said that.

Hon. John C. Munro (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I would have assumed that an hon. member who usually behaves fairly in this House would have noticed that Your Honour mentioned that the Minister of National Health and Welfare had a question of privilege to raise with respect to this matter. That was her notice to indicate to the House that she has—

Mr. Clark: Another evasion.

Mr. Stevens: Answer the question.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Let me finish, if you don't mind. That was her notice to indicate to the House that she has a question of privilege. The rules, which have been agreed to by all parties in this House, say that a question of privilege of this nature is usually to be taken up at three o'clock. At that time the minister will have an opportunity to explain her grievance, which is legitimate in my opinion. The hon. member who has just risen will have ample opportunity to comment on that question of privilege at that time. Those are the dictates of fairness as I perceive them.

● (1432)

Miss MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, my question was to the Acting Prime Minister. I was not asking him what the Minister of National Health and Welfare said but whether it was—and I ask him this in his position of Acting Prime Minister—whether or not it was government policy which she stated. That is the question I wanted him to answer. Will he answer that question?

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is drawing conclusions based on content which my colleague the hon. Minister of National Health and Welfare questions through a question of privilege. I think before drawing her unjustifiable conclusions she should at least hear what the hon. minister has to say.

Mr. Clark: Cover-up.

Miss MacDonald: A final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Could I ask the Acting Prime Minister if he would look at that statement and then tell the House how he would reconcile it with this statement by the Solicitor General with reference to the seizure of lists of the Parti Québécois:

[Miss Bégin.]

It was authorized and carried out in the absolute conviction that its sole object was to promote the security of Canada given the political and social climate prevailing in 1973.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, since the hon. member seems to be ready to draw conclusions before she has even heard from the hon. minister I will draw my own. I have a very high regard for the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): I do not believe she has breached the tenets of ministerial responsibility.

Mr. Clark: You don't know what they are.

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POST OFFICE**POSSIBILITY OF INQUIRY INTO VIOLATIONS OF POST OFFICE ACT—MINISTER'S KNOWLEDGE OF VIOLATIONS OF ACT**

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, my question follows the question that was opened up by the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition and is directed to the Postmaster General. In view of the fact that Section 48(3) of the Post Office Act gives the Postmaster General the authority to appoint officers employed in the post office to conduct an inquiry similar to one conducted under the Inquiries Act into the violations of the post office under Section 48, could the Postmaster General inform the House if he has authorized such personnel in his office to carry out this responsibility, if they are having liaison with the security forces and whether they report regularly to the hon. gentleman?

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, I have not yet acted under Section 48(3). There is not as yet any evidence upon which I could do so.

Mr. Dinsdale: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In light of complaints that come from members of parliament, and I am sure these will be specifically mentioned here from time to time, and in view of the vital importance of the privacy of the mails with respect to civil liberties and the Postmaster General's exclusive privilege under Section 8 of the Post Office Act for "collecting, conveying and delivering letters in Canada," can the hon. gentleman inform the House how the mail could be "liable to demand seizure or detention" in the words of Section 43 of the act without his knowledge, particularly when questions of security are involved?

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. gentleman had listened to my first reply he would have noted that I indicated my own security and investigation services have reported to me this morning that they have not participated as has been alleged in yesterday's program.