

Oral Questions

contradiction, I ask the Prime Minister whether he would consider launching a federal public inquiry into this matter since it could possibly involve a conspiracy to conceal evidence at the most senior levels of his government.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I take exception to the allegation by the Leader of the Opposition that the former commissioner was "being diplomatic" in his answer. I am sure he gave an answer to the best of his knowledge. He was not attempting to cover up anything; he was stating he did not remember giving information but he would be surprised if he had not given information. And it was established by the present solicitor general that information of this nature—

An hon. Member: Cover up!

Mr. Trudeau: It seems to me that the present Minister of Supply and Services, the former solicitor general, is stating a fact. He was not informed. The others cannot say they informed him but they say they would be surprised if they had not. The words speak for themselves and the Leader of the Opposition should draw his own conclusions.

Some hon. Members: Oh!

BREAK-IN AT L'AGENCE DE PRESSE LIBRE—REQUEST FOR STATEMENT BY MINISTER OF SUPPLY AND SERVICES

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): I missed the end of the Prime Minister's response, except it is clear he continued to refuse to have all the evidence made public so that the light of day can be cast upon precisely what that minister was doing at the time.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: This matter involves a minister of the Crown, now Minister of Supply and Services, and former solicitor general, whose reaction to public embarrassment, as one of my hon. friends has said, has simply been to blame public servants. We are now asked to believe that the minister was not aware of participation in the break-in by the RCMP under his authority and that in fact he did not even ask about RCMP involvement. The statement on Friday indicates only that the Minister of Supply and Services is either incompetent or that he cannot be believed. I ask the Prime Minister whether he will order the Minister of Supply and Services to make a full statement of his involvement in this matter, preferably before a federal public inquiry or at least somewhere under oath.

● (1420)

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we have the statement of the former solicitor general to the effect that he did not know of the break-in by the RCMP.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

[Mr. Clark.]

Mr. Trudeau: I, for one, am prepared to accept the word of a colleague who is a member of the Privy Council and a minister of the Crown.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: If the hon. members opposite have cause to doubt his word, of course, they can always challenge it in a way which is well known by this House.

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, we in this House of Commons, and the people of Canada, are not prepared to accept the information which was conveyed through another minister by a minister who refuses—which would have been the honourable thing to do—to seek the unanimous agreement of this House so that he might make a statement which would be subject to questioning.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

BREAK-IN AT L'AGENCE DE PRESSE LIBRE—REASON FOR REFUSAL TO CONDUCT PUBLIC INQUIRY

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): The suspicions which arise here will never be put to rest until the Prime Minister is prepared to let this man be questioned in a way in which the answers can be accepted.

My final supplementary to the Prime Minister relates to the very serious fact that the only official investigation which is under way in respect to l'Agence de Presse Libre du Québec break-in is a provincial inquiry. In effect, we have the Parti Québécois government investigating the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I should like to ask the Prime Minister why he will not call his own investigation and why he is leaving an investigation of the federal police force to the separatist government of the province of Quebec?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition should know, under our constitution and under our Criminal Code, as it is written, the administration of justice comes under the attorneys general of the provinces. In the province of Quebec we have a government which was lawfully elected by the people of Quebec. If the hon. member disagrees with the procedure followed by that government, of course he can make his views known to it. There is a long established law and tradition in this country that justice be administered by the province. Because of the circumstances mentioned by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, one would think that the Parti Québécois government would make very sure, in this particular case, that the facts are brought to light. This is what we hope will be the case.

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, is the Prime Minister of Canada trying to seriously suggest to this House of Commons that he has no jurisdiction to look into this matter, or is it simply that he will not?

Mr. Paproski: No-guts Pierre.