

[Translation]

Mr. Goyer: Mr. Speaker, I never had any other body than the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to check into complaints about its members. I have always relied upon and trusted the RCMP. I indicated in my statement that this was not an ideal system, that I had suggested myself to the Prime Minister that a commission of inquiry should be set up, first, on the issue of discipline within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, because that was and still is in my view a major issue, and second, on how to channel and investigate complaints against the force as the federal police force. The Prime Minister later acted on that suggestion when my predecessor the Hon. Warren Allmand became Solicitor General.

● (1640)

[English]

Mr. MacKay: A final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. When the minister's successors were coming under question as a result of this matter, did he at any time, either then or before, brief his successor, the present Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, or indeed the present incumbent, and tell them fully what was going on? Did he, also, recently take the opportunity to meet with former commissioner Higgitt and police director Starnes in order to check the validity of their two impressions, as opposed to his non-recollection, that possibly there was some reason for believing that he had been briefed? How much effort did the minister make to verify his contention that he could never have been briefed, despite the fact that these two eminent gentlemen said they would be surprised if he had not been?

[Translation]

Mr. Goyer: Mr. Speaker, although a lawyer the hon. member is being quite naïve. I shall draw a parallel. When some member leaves his office, he necessarily hands over his files. If he were to give a briefing on every case he is leaving behind, this would become an unending communication. When a minister leaves his portfolio, he must necessarily rely on his departmental officials to keep his successor informed on the files still pending. That is normal. Of course, I discussed with my successor matters of a general nature involving the orientation of the department. But there was no question that I discussed individual cases, and this includes the one referred to by the hon. member.

Indeed, I met the former RCMP Commissioner, I met the former Director General of Security Services and the current Commissioner of the RCMP, the future Commissioner of the RCMP, the current Director General of Security Services, the assistant Solicitor General and the Solicitor General. This was less than a month ago, and, of course, there was an exchange of views on this whole issue. I understand the statement made June 17 last by the Solicitor General of Canada resulted, in part at least, from that meeting.

[English]

Business of the House

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

DESIGNATION OF ALLOTTED DAY

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I should like, for the convenience of the House, to designate tomorrow, June 22, as an allotted day and to request the House, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order 58(5), to agree that June 22 shall be the final allotted day for the business of supply for the period ending June 30, 1977.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, that is agreeable to us and in accordance with some discussions that my colleague and I have had. Mr. Speaker, while I am on my feet, may I make an observation with respect to the procedure today, though not in any way to question the Chair. We have had a very interesting two days regarding the right of members to question. Yesterday the Chair ruled that under no circumstances could a minister be questioned as to his responsibilities in a former position. Today, in answer to a statement made by the Minister of Supply and Services who indicated that he would be willing to be questioned, the minister was questioned *in extenso* with respect to his former duties as a minister of the Crown.

I reread Your Honour's statement of yesterday and I must say that your statement was extremely strong. I would hope that the activities which have occurred today have broken new ground in the House of Commons and that we will now be able to question ministers of the Crown during the course of the regular question period with respect to their former capacities, at least while they are ministers, and perhaps beyond. We would have to explore that. But I would hope we have broken new ground, because there does seem to be some conflict between the two points of view.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton has raised an important point. He may recall that yesterday when the point of order was debated I recognized the difficulty which the opposition had, under the rules, to question the Minister of Supply and Services. I said that I hoped a way could be found to overcome this rule which, despite what happened today, is still in effect. It was because of the desire to accommodate the House that the Minister of Supply and Services, when he began his statement on privilege, said that he was ready, if the House wished, and with the consent of the House, to open himself to questions and to give members an opportunity to question him.

Despite what has been said by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton, I do not believe that the ruling made yesterday has in any way been affected by an arrangement that was entered into, first of all by the consent of the minister and of all hon. members.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suppose it provides fascinating consideration, but I did guard that ground, I thought, today when during the question period, in response to the question put by the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby, the minister indicated that he would make a statement. I believe I said then