

Solicitor General's appropriateness in terms of the way in which he conducted himself at that time?

**Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister himself has answered that question on several occasions in the past, and very capably so. As far back as October 26, he said in recorded media interviews the following:

I think that the matter was handled with a very meticulous regard for all of the circumstances. The process worked well and it was done in the proper way.

At that point the Solicitor General was referring to the investigation. He went on:

I have no intention at this point of getting involved in the mechanics of what the RCMP are doing. I have confidence that they will carry out their duties in an exemplary way. I don't intend to in any way interfere with the procedures here.

Those statements stood then and, if I understand what the Solicitor General is saying today, they stand now. If I know the Solicitor General, I am sure he will follow those most immaculate processes in the future.

#### RESPONSE TO INVITATION TO MEETING

**Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, does the Deputy Prime Minister not think that, since the Solicitor General was aware of the investigation, it was incumbent upon him to inform Mr. Hatfield, when he was requested to meet with him, that it would be inappropriate for the Solicitor General even to discuss the charges, the circumstances surrounding the charges, or for that matter the circumstances surrounding the investigation, and that Mr. Hatfield ought to pursue his concerns in some other direction?

**Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker, in all justice and fairness, I think we should put matters into perspective. The Hon. House Leader for the New Democratic Party does obliquely what the Hon. Member for York South-Weston did in a rather more despicable and direct fashion, and that is accuse the Solicitor General of improprieties. If that is the accusation that Hon. Members wish to make, then, as the Solicitor General said, let them be honest enough to make it.

Without an allegation or an accusation of impropriety, there was nothing at all wrong and everything right about a Minister of the Crown acceding to the request of a head of one of our provincial Governments to meet. There is everything right about it. In perspective, some two or three weeks after that meeting, charges were laid. Surely that in itself suggests no impropriety and no interference on the part of the Solicitor General.

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

**Mr. Nielsen:** If charges had not been laid, the Hon. Member might have a point. Beyond that, the matter went through the normal judicial system, was tried by a duly constituted court of law, and the Premier was found not guilty. Surely in all fairness and justice, based upon the experience of the Hon.

#### Oral Questions

Member himself, the Hon. Member should not be attempting to re-try this matter in the House of Commons.

#### MINISTER'S JUDGMENT

**Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister knows full well that I am not in any way trying to re-try the matter. What I am asking for is a clear understanding of what the Deputy Prime Minister expects from Cabinet Ministers in the way of judgment.

I would like to know if the Deputy Prime Minister does not at least agree that it was bad judgment on the part of the Solicitor General to agree to hold a meeting with a person, albeit a person in high office—in fact, it is perhaps even worse that he was in high office—who was under investigation by the police force over which the Solicitor General has jurisdiction. Does the Deputy Prime Minister not feel that that showed remarkably bad judgment?

● (1430)

**Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker, in all of the circumstances I consider it not to be in bad judgment. Indeed, having regard to the consequences which eventually flowed—the laying of charges, the trial, the judgment of the court—

**Mr. Kaplan:** One charge.

**Mr. Nielsen:** —the charge—surely that, in itself, indicates that no impropriety occurred at that meeting.

#### INFORMATION GIVEN BY MINISTER TO RCMP COMMISSIONER

**Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to return to questioning the Solicitor General. He does not seem to realize that, in fact, the law does give him the authority to give direction to the RCMP to close files, to lay charges, or not to lay charges. It is an authority which should be exercised in a very circumspect manner, as has been set out by a number of authorities on the subject. In that connection, and with those powers—and the meeting has possibilities which have been outlined by Members on this side of the House—before holding the meeting did the Solicitor General consult with his Deputy or with the Commissioner of the RCMP to inform them about the proposed meeting or to ask their advice?

**Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Solicitor General of Canada):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend and I have a fundamental disagreement as to what precisely is my jurisdiction. We might have a discussion about that. Again, I maintain that it is not my discretionary authority to instruct the RCMP as to how it should proceed in a case such as this. Indeed, we have to look at all the circumstances, as well as the responsibilities of the Attorney General for the Province of New Brunswick.

I wonder what the Opposition would say had I refused the meeting? Would they now be saying that it was my responsi-