

Privilege

My question is this. Last week the Solicitor General announced with great fanfare that today of all days is the start of Crime Prevention Week. Is it the minister's idea of crime prevention to turn his back on his own employees who are on the front lines of the administration of justice?

• (1500)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Blais (Solicitor General of Canada and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, I already informed the House last week that in consultation with the National Parole Board and Correctional Service Canada, we have taken all the necessary steps to deal with the current situation.

I can assure this House that we will take care of all people who are on parole. Management staff at the penitentiaries and the National Parole Board will be monitoring the strike very carefully closely.

I can assure the Hon. Member that since this morning, I have been in touch with the authorities at the National Parole Board and Correctional Service Canada, and that at this time, everything is going well. I think that we must act as responsible citizens and avoid raising such matters in public. We must not create false fears where none exist at this time.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: Given the time, we will move on. I will hear the hon. member for Windsor West on a question of privilege.

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PRIVILEGE

RALLY ON PARLIAMENT HILL

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, today at noon several thousand Canadians gathered on Parliament Hill—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I was present at the rally. None of the Conservatives had the nerve, the courage or the commitment to their ideas to come out and meet those thousand of Canadians. As between my statement that thousands were there and the com-

ments of the Tories, I suggest that Canadians will decide who they want to believe on this subject since the Conservatives did not have the guts to be present.

These Canadians rallied on the Hill against the government's goods and services tax. Among them were several hundred taxi drivers who had driven to the Hill in a procession and they hoped that at the conclusion of their rally, they could drive their cabs around the driveway in front of the Parliament Buildings and out again. However, the taxi drivers, when they first approached the Hill in a procession, had been stopped by a road-block of RCMP cars approximately opposite the Centennial Flame. When the taxi drivers attempted to proceed around the driveway of the House of Commons and the Senate to the main entrance of the Peace Tower, they were stopped by this road-block.

The RCMP officers who had gathered around the police cars in question persisted in maintaining this road-block even after Members of Parliament entered the cabs at the front of the procession and asked to be driven up Parliament Hill to the main entrance of the Parliament Buildings at the Peace Tower.

I and other Members of Parliament asked the sergeant in charge why we were not allowed to proceed in these taxi cabs. He said that he was acting under instructions and could not remove the road-block until those instructions were changed. When I and other MPs asked the sergeant who had given these instructions he remained silent and refused to say who had done so.

At that point, I and several other members went to see the Sergeant-at-Arms who apparently had not heard about this matter. He came out with us to talk to the RCMP sergeant in charge and, as a result, there was initially an agreement between the RCMP and the representative of the taxi drivers that some 30 cars could proceed around the main driveway by the Peace Tower.

After this was announced to the taxi drivers and a large number of other people who were there watching what was going on, the individual taxi drivers at first said that if all the drivers could not drive their cabs around, none would do so, at which point, I and some of the other members proceeded back on foot to the Peace Tower. At that point, a number of cars came through bearing members of the public and some Members of Parliament.