

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

### THE MINISTRY

#### REQUEST FOR STATEMENT OF POLICY ON MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY

**Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, without reflecting at all on the Chair, I would make a point that there would be a greater opportunity for more motions to be moved under Standing Order 43 before the expiry of time, if ministers were in their place at two o'clock.

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

**Mr. Clark:** My question is to the Acting Prime Minister, and it arises from statements made by the Prime Minister and other ministers this past week which indicate that this government does not accept the traditional concept of ministerial responsibility by which civil servants have a responsibility to execute cabinet policies and by which ministers have a responsibility in turn for the actions of their subordinates. Will the Acting Prime Minister give us an undertaking now that the Prime Minister will make a clear and comprehensive statement in this House in the very near future of the views of this government with respect to ministerial responsibility?

[Translation]

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Acting Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, the government policy concerning ministerial responsibility is well known. It was often demonstrated in the House during discussions like those we had this week, and in all circumstances, we admit that ministers are responsible for their administration and, as I said, the House of Commons knows perfectly well the procedure adopted in the past.

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[English]

### ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

#### BREAK-IN AT L'AGENCE DE PRESSE LIBRE—KNOWLEDGE OF POSSIBLE INVOLVEMENT OF ORGANIZATION IN AIRCRAFT HIJACKING

**Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, the concept of ministerial responsibility of this government is to blame its public servants for things that go wrong and to take every opportunity that is available to avoid knowing about matters which might cause embarrassment later on.

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

**Mr. Clark:** I want to deal now with one of the questions on which there has been a clear indication of ministerial irresponsibility, and that relates to the actions of a former solicitor general, now the Minister of Supply and Services. This question is directed to his successor, the present Solicitor General. In view of revelations this morning in the press to the effect that the RCMP break-in to the offices of L'Agence de Presse Libre du Québec was an anti-terrorist measure designed to

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avert a possible aircraft hijacking, can the Solicitor General tell the House if this was a reason for the raid, and can he also inform the House if this matter was brought to the attention of the former solicitor general, now the Minister of Supply and Services? The Minister of Supply and Services has claimed he had been briefed on several occasions prior to the break-in by the RCMP with respect to the activities of L'Agence de Presse Libre du Québec, and he stated also that his ministerial responsibilities included constant—and I emphasize constant—supervision of national security affairs.

[Translation]

**Hon. Francis Fox (Solicitor General):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I must tell him, naturally, just as the then solicitor general told the House, that he was not aware of the police raid before it took place. The first part of the question concerns whether or not he had authorized the raid. The second part of the question seeks to establish whether the then solicitor general was aware of the activities or rather the police information concerning the possibility of terrorist activities. I already told the House very clearly during the question period last Friday that it goes without saying that from time to time the then solicitor general received information on possible terrorist activities in the Montreal area and, I presume, other parts of the country as well. It is also obvious, Mr. Speaker, on reading the file on that period, that members of the RCMP, and possibly two other police forces were involved, because, as some hon. members seem to forget, there was at that time a joint anti-terrorist team; only two years had elapsed since the October 1970 events. The members of that team, Mr. Speaker, according to the reports I have been given, felt there were indications that perhaps to commemorate the death—I should say the murder—of Pierre Laporte in 1970, other acts of terrorism could take place.

[English]

**Mr. Clark:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to try to solicit from the Solicitor General—and he might have to consult with his colleague, unless his colleague makes another statement on a question of privilege—whether the former solicitor general of Canada had been briefed regarding the possibility of people associated with the office of L'Agence de Presse Libre being involved in an aircraft hijacking, and whether there had been any suggestion to the then solicitor general prior to the break-in that there would be potential involvement by people in that agency with that kind of terrorist activity or with other kinds of terrorist activities.

[Translation]

**Mr. Fox:** Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out, of course I would have to go through each file with a fine tooth comb. Mr. Speaker, I think the only relevant question is not to know what the police said to the government at that time, but whether or not the minister or any members of the RCMP were aware of the raid and if they had authorized an investigation of an illegal nature. Mr. Speaker, we did answer repeatedly in the House that nobody at the ministerial