

Oral Questions

Mr. Hnatyshyn: A short supplementary question. I think there are many inconsistencies, one of which I pointed out with respect to the information the Prime Minister received from this minister which would indicate that either he was misinformed or was lied to. I would ask the Minister of Supply and Services whether he will undertake to make a statement on motions regarding his personal involvement with respect to an illegal act, regardless of ministerial responsibility, but simply whether he can clear his name with respect to the whole question of whether he was involved in any illegal act personally?

Mr. Alexander: We gave you a chance and you did not take it.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Greenwood.

Mr. Alexander: Send him out of the country again; give him a Ouellet holiday.

BREAK-IN AT L'AGENCE DE PRESSE LIBRE—ALLEGATION OF CONSPIRACY TO COVER UP—GOVERNMENT ACTION

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Prime Minister about an aspect of the matter that does not seem to be fully explored. As I understand it, the Solicitor General has told us that on November 6 he was advised by the Commissioner and by Mr. Starnes not to answer a letter which he had received complaining about the alleged break-in. What I want to ask is whether this does not seem to smack of a conspiracy to defeat the administration of justice and what, if anything, is being done about that. I am not accusing the Solicitor General of being involved in it, although I would certainly like to know what part he played in it. I am suggesting, however, that at the very top of our national police force there are people who will conspire to suppress evidence or suppress following up matters as important to the administration of justice as this. What is this government going to do about it?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, that is a very serious question and I am presently discussing that with the Solicitor General.

Mr. Brewin: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, and on a little different line. In his speech on Friday the Solicitor General made this commitment or statement: at page 6793 of *Hansard*:

The government decided, therefore, not to establish a royal commission,—

That is, to go into this whole matter—

—but remained firmly committed to re-examining the matter once the judicial process had run its normal course.

I should like to ask the Prime Minister, at least on one interpretation, after these men had pleaded guilty and received a discharge, whether the judicial process had not in fact run its course? I wonder if the government's undertaking to re-examine the matter with a royal commission is not now operative. If

it is not now operative, when will it become operative? Are we to wait indefinitely while various inquiries are made in Quebec? Is it not now time for the government to act on what it promised, on what the Solicitor General says it decided to do and committed itself to doing some time ago?

• (1500)

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, that is a rephrasing of the previous question, which I conceded was an important point of view. The only additional aspect to the question is—when, as I indicated to the hon. member, I am discussing that with the present Solicitor General. I think the hon. member asked an important and serious question, and it is causing us great concern.

BREAK-IN AT L'AGENCE DE PRESSE LIBRE—FAILURE OF MINISTER OF SUPPLY AND SERVICES TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACTIONS OF FORCE

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. As it has always been accepted practice, in every Canadian government, that ministers take full responsibility for the actions of those for whom they have ministerial responsibility, and as the Prime Minister confirmed in this House on May 24 last that that is the case with this government, will he explain to the House why the former solicitor general is being allowed, by him, to claim not to have any ministerial responsibility for the actions of the RCMP officer for whom the minister had ministerial responsibility and who was involved in the 1972 break-in, as the minister did in his press announcement of June 2?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP officer who committed the illegality has pleaded guilty in front of the courts. I do not think the hon. member is alleging that, unless the minister had knowledge and directed the member of the RCMP to commit that illegality, that he would be bound by any sense of ministerial responsibility. I have the minister's clear statement of the fact that neither he nor the Commissioner of the RCMP knew about the break-in before it took place. This is also confirmed by the Commissioner of the RCMP. Therefore, I do not understand how the hon. member can argue that a minister is responsible for an act which was committed without his knowledge.

Mr. Hees: Mr. Speaker, is the Prime Minister not aware that all ministers who have ever served in Canadian governments have always been willing to accept responsibility for the acts, whatever they were, of those concerned under their jurisdiction, and the former solicitor general is doing something which is completely different from what has been accepted practice? He is trying to duck responsibility, something which no honourable minister has ever done before.

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, surely the relevant point is this: While the minister was the minister responsible, he did not know of the illegalities of those under his charge. When the illegalities of those under the charge of the solicitor general