

Oral Questions

the issuing of this press release hours before the event, which perhaps has still not taken place, has anything to do with the fact that the Prime Minister is returning to the House tomorrow—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kaplan:—and the Government wants to prepare a good reason, in its opinion, for refusing to answer further questions?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Blais (Solicitor General of Canada and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, I believe I did my duty when I answered the Hon. Member's question earlier. It is not customary—the Hon. Member, himself a former solicitor general, knows perfectly well that the Solicitor General does not have to be consulted nor does he have to make any decisions himself about an investigation being conducted by a police force like the RCMP. The RCMP has conducted its investigation. It has consulted with members of the Attorney General's Department of the Province of Ontario. It has concluded that charges should be laid. It was the RCMP's decision to issue a press release last night. I myself—

An Hon. Member: It was the RCMP's decision!

Mr. Blais: Exactly, it was the RCMP's decision. I had nothing to do with it. It is the kind of decision that is made by a police force, and I see that the Hon. Member is well aware of the situation. Mr. Speaker, I think that in the circumstances, the sensible thing to do is to refrain from public comments so that the individuals involved will be able to get a fair trial.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

[*English*]

PARLIAMENTARY ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Deputy Prime Minister. I have here a copy of the search warrant documents that were issued to the RCMP. There is confirmation on page 3 of one of these documents that indeed the first leak to Mutual Life Insurance of Canada, or someone who gave the documents to Mutual Life Insurance of Canada, occurred on Monday, April 24, fully three days before

the Budget was due. This is confirmation from the RCMP in the search warrant documents.

I would like to now switch to the question of parliamentary accountability. In light of the fact that the Deputy Prime Minister said yesterday that he did not find out about the Mutual leak until 3.30 p.m. or 4 o'clock on the afternoon of Thursday, April 27, I wonder if he can now say in a categorical sense whether any Cabinet Minister was aware of the leak to Mutual Life of Canada before or during the Question Period of Thursday, April 27—

An Hon. Member: Good question.

Mr. Nystrom:—and if not, who are the members of the parliamentary staff of the Government who decided to withhold that information from the Ministers of Canada?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, I answered that question yesterday in the House.

An Hon. Member: No, you did not.

Mr. Mazankowski: The Minister—

An Hon. Member: You never answered the question yet.

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I did answer the question as to when I was informed.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An Hon. Member: When did the Finance Minister know?

Mr. Mazankowski: Just a minute, I will get to that. The Minister of Finance answered the question as to when he was informed. I am advised that the Prime Minister's office was advised by the Clerk of the Privy Council about the same time as I was advised. I know of no other Minister of the Crown having had the knowledge to which the Hon. Member referred. Mr. Speaker—

An Hon. Member: Come on.

Mr. Mazankowski: Well, what he was asking, Mr. Speaker, was: Was anybody aware—

An Hon. Member: During Question Period.

Mr. Mazankowski:—of the fact that there was the incident of the Mutual Life matter brought to the