

Privilege—Mr. Goyer

did he say whether one of his men had made a search without warrant?

Mr. Goyer: Mr. Speaker, it was a meeting with the commissioner of the RCMP and the director general of the security service, and my answer is "no".

[English]

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, I, too, have a question for the minister. Throughout his contribution to the discussion of this question of privilege, and throughout the statement on Friday by the Solicitor General, this situation has been referred to as an isolated incident. However, the House knows that I, myself, along with the hon. member for Central Nova have drawn attention to a number of similar situations.

I am asking the minister whether he is claiming the same innocent ignorance in relation to the break-in at Praxis Corporation, since following that incident the minister, under his own signature, sent out a letter which contained some of the information found in the stolen material. Also, in that case the minister was bound to know the material was stolen since the incident was widely reported in the media at the time. This would make the hon. gentleman at least suspect of taking part in a conspiracy to repress the truth.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Oberle: Can the minister relate to that situation?

[Translation]

Mr. Goyer: Mr. Speaker, first I do not think it has been demonstrated that the RCMP made an illegal break-in in the Praxis case and, second, the whole Praxis case happened when I was not Solicitor General of Canada. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I do not think that the object matter of the question refers to my responsibilities as Solicitor General but only on that part of my responsibilities concerning the APLQ case.

[English]

Mr. Oberle: With all respect, it has not been proven that the RCMP had no part in that break-in. However, it has been proven that there was a break-in, and it has been proven that the former solicitor general sent out a letter over his signature accusing 21 innocent Canadians of conspiring to overthrow the government and replace it with a radical alternative. The minister must have known, when he sent that letter, that the evidence upon which it was based was stolen evidence. Did he ask the people who had provided that information where they obtained that evidence? Did he order an investigation as to who the thieves were, regardless of what we know today? What was the nature of his discussions with those persons who gave him the evidence on the basis of which he signed and sent around a letter to the various departments and agencies of government?

[Translation]

Mr. Goyer: Mr. Speaker, first, the hon. member tells us a nice story which might satisfy him but which is not consistent

[Mr. Beaudoin.]

with the facts and, second, I do not think that we are now dealing with that matter is the House.

[English]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I am prepared to allow the hon. member for Prince George-Peace River to ask a further question. Then I think the hon. member for Central Nova should conclude the questioning. After that we should get on with other business.

Mr. Oberle: I must ask the minister this: Is he telling the House that he did not write the letter of June 15, 1971, and that he was not solicitor general at the time of the break-in at Praxis? That is what he has just said. I am suggesting he makes himself suspect to taking part in a conspiracy to obstruct justice and repress the truth.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I have two points to make briefly, and a couple of questions to ask. I think we should remember that the most serious difficulties concerning this matter were raised, not just by opposition parties in this House but by a former commissioner of the RCMP and a former director of police security services. I would also submit that there is a distinct difference between fault and responsibility. The minister's exculpatory statement would have gone down much better in this chamber if he had been prepared to say, in effect, "It was not entirely my fault, but I accept some responsibility for it". That is exactly what any lawyer would do for a law clerk before a colleague. I should like to ask the minister whether it was the usual practice for the RCMP to recommend to him that he not answer letters. Was this something which was done regularly; or was this a particular occasion?

[Translation]

Mr. Goyer: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member can say all the nonsense he wants on the matter of ministerial responsibilities, I do not care. I am ready to assume my responsibilities each time I am involved in a decision. However I cannot take any responsibility for something I do not know. Ministerial responsibility as the responsibilities of lawyer are as simple as that. Maybe the hon. member did not learn this in law school. Now I shall answer his question. Mr. Speaker, I do not remember if the RCMP told me not to answer a letter, but as I said, it should be checked. I remember very well that some people asked to meet me and after discussing the matter with the RCMP I met none of its members for obvious reasons that I do not have to explain but I think I acted in a responsible way.

[English]

Mr. MacKay: I thank the minister for his answer and would remind him that whatever his contentions, he was at the time the man responsible for seeing that the federal police force of this country did not break the law. This did not happen, and he will not take any responsibility; that is obvious. I ask the minister this: Has he ever investigated any complaints made against the force over which he had responsibility? Is he telling us he has never done anything personally to verify any complaints made against the force?