

Inquiries of the Ministry

member in matters of patronage in and around Ottawa?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Justice): On a question of privilege, I referred to the Solicitor General only as the senior member of the government in the Ottawa area.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Just one word, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the ruling you have given with regard to answers to questions. I put my question to the Prime Minister as head of the government with regard to the statements he made in Halifax, and I would repeat—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member has asked his question. If the Prime Minister would like to reply in the usual way—

Mr. Hees: Let's have something better than that.

Mr. Speaker: Before the Prime Minister answers, perhaps I should explain that the rule to which the hon. member has alluded is that a question referring to a statement made outside the house should be directed to the Prime Minister, as has been done, and should ask whether that statement represents government policy.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: With all due respect, having asked the question the hon. member should allow the Prime Minister to answer.

Right Hon. P.-E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): The answer was given by the Minister of Justice. He was misquoted by the hon. member for Cape Breton-East Richmond. The reason I did not answer right away was that I suspected there might be a misquote coming from the hon. member.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): On a point of order, and probably a question of privilege too, I suggest to the Prime Minister in all sincerity that whether he intended it or not, his words carried the imputation that the hon. member who asked the question was quite likely to have misquoted the Minister of Justice, and I suggest the Prime Minister might wish to correct that imputation.

Mr. Trudeau: No correction, Mr. Speaker, because there was no such imputation. I was
[Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond).]

suggesting that the hon. member had misquoted my hon. friend and the facts, as stated by the minister, indicate that there has been a misquotation. When I said there probably had been one I was merely basing my opinion upon the statistical average of the hon. member.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I wonder whether we will make much headway by pursuing this matter further.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): On a question of privilege, I think the Prime Minister himself has clearly indicated that he does not know what went on last night, and I quote him as having just said—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: May we have order, please?

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): The Prime Minister, referring to last evening's program, used the word "probably". This is an indication that he did not himself hear the remark made by the Minister of Justice and could not therefore impute motives in connection with any question. When seeking a reply from the Prime Minister, it is not "the usual" we want; it is the facts we want, and if the backbenchers of the Liberal party wish to continue in an effort—

Some hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member has made his point. I recognize the rule is that no improper motives may be imputed, and I am sure hon. members on both sides recognize this rule and wish to abide by it.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Further to the question of privilege, I would be perfectly willing to allow the matter to stand where it is if the Prime Minister would get up and say that he actually witnessed the program last night; or if not, withdraw his remarks.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): On this question of privilege—

An hon. Member: There's the expert.

Mr. Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): No, I am not an expert as some ignoramus across the way has suggested.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.