[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, since the Solicitor General gave us a very ambiguous answer, Canadian National, which is a Crown corporation, made a deal connected with the budget leak. Later, CN apparently withdrew. When did CN withdraw from this deal? When did the Minister of Transport find out that CN had made a deal? When did the Solicitor General find out about this deal? When did the Minister of Finance find out about this deal which was an attempt to get around his Budget? Again, my question is: Why did the Solicitor General fail to inform the House of Commons for seven months, of the deal made by the CN?

Hon. Pierre Blais (Solicitor General of Canada and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, I find it hard to understand what the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition is driving at. When I report here in the House of Commons on information that I have been given by the Commissioner of the RCMP, the Government is accused of interfering with the RCMP's investigations. When the Goverment does not intervene and lets the police do its work and conduct its investigation, they say we are not doing our job. I think you should make up your mind and tell us exactly what you think we should be doing.

Mr. Speaker, I feel that what we have done is hand over all the facts to the RCMP which is an honourable police force. All the facts known to us are handed over to the RCMP. It has to conduct its investigation, and it is up to the RCMP to decide when to lay charges. That is how things are done in a democratic country like Canada, and I do not intend to change the way we do things.

[*English*]

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Deputy Prime Minister. I think I am in a position to challenge the statements just made by the Solicitor General about the degree to which this government believes that the RCMP should be allowed to do its own work.

Last week a hearing was held by the Quebec Order of Engineers in Montreal into one of the bribes that was paid to Michel Gravel, the former Tory MP. An engineer, Jean-Niel Plotte, who was asked for the bribe said that Bernard Roy, the Prime Minister's then principal secretary told him that the RCMP investigation would only be a little in-house investigation and that there were not supposed to be any charges laid. That is a direct quote. On what basis would the Prime Minister's office be able to give such an assurance about the RCMP whose independence is supposed to be protected by the government and not compromised by it. Does this Prime Minister's office think that they run the RCMP?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member, I am sure, is aware that this matter was in fact turned over to the RCMP as soon as it was brought to the attention of the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office. Charges have been laid. What more does the hon. member want? Does he want to go back and renege on the charges?

I find the line of questioning rather bizarre. First, the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition suggests that the RCMP should turn over all its information with regard to an investigation to the Solicitor General. I do not know much about law, but I know enough about the process of justice that that would be totally unfair. Maybe that is why the hon. Leader of the Opposition finds himself in so much difficulty, if that is the kind of approach he takes to running the affairs of his Party and leading a once proud national party.

Mr. Kaplan: The laying of charges and the conviction that followed is an important side, but only one side of the responsibility. Here is evidence from the Prime Minister's Office that it believes that it is running the RCMP.

[*Translation*]

After the investigation, Michel Gravelle said that the $75,000 he received was not much, and that others were getting $300,000 or $400,000.

Mr. Boudria: Who?

Mr. Kaplan: That's what he said.

Will the government act responsibly and investigate these claims? Has the government done anything about identifying these people and cleaning up its act?

[*English*]

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is talking about a news story that arose out of an exchange with respect to an engineer's disciplinary body. I am not going to engage in commenting on speculation and comments of that nature. The RCMP were called in and conducted an investigation. If the hon. member has any questions to raise about the method and the thoroughness of the RCMP investigation, there are ways and means in which he can follow that through with an appropriate line of questioning before the committee. Other mechanisms are available with regard to provisions that have been provided for with respect to the