

The Address—Mr. W. Baker

[Translation]

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order.

Under Standing Order 32(7), no member, except the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, shall speak for more than 30 minutes at a time in the said debate; provided that 40 minutes shall be allowed to the mover of either an amendment or of a subamendment. My understanding of this provision of the Standing Orders is that, be it an amendment, a subamendment or a motion, a member is not entitled to speak for more than 30 minutes in the debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. Since the hon. member admitted, as a reply to my question, that he had actually spoken for 30 minutes, I respectfully submit that his time has expired, that what he actually intends to do today is only to raise a question of procedure, that he can do so on a point of order and that we will have the opportunity to discuss and possibly to disprove his arguments; and, finally, he is not entitled to take part twice in this debate, to the prejudice of others members' rights.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. According to our records, all the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton did was to second the motion of the hon. member for Battle River (Mr. Malone) on Monday. So according to our records he has not spoken. The hon. member for Grenville-Carleton has the floor.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, in the minute remaining to me, the very important point to make, aside from hon. members opposite making a travesty of the rules, is the concerted attempt by this government, as it has before, to pass off on to the RCMP what is basically its responsibility to know. I am in no way defending any illegal act, neither am I defending the impropriety of this minister.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair till two o'clock p.m. later this day.

At one o'clock the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

● (1402)

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, just before the luncheon adjournment, when your colleague was in the chair, I was indicating my displeasure about the method the government chose to make the startling and astounding announcement that we have yet another break-in, apparently illegal, by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The announcement he would make was well known to the Solicitor General (Mr. Fox). In fact, it was so well known that he was not present today during the question period so that no questions could be asked of him, and he chose not to rise at the first

[Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton).]

opportunity he had, namely, during motions, before orders of the day were called. Instead, he made the announcement in the course of his speech in the debate on the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne. It is quite legal, of course—slick politics, but quite legal—to smuggle in such an announcement during a speech in a debate, and thus deny members of parliament the right to deal with economic matters or other matters, rather than on motions when we would have the right and the power to question the minister.

● (1412)

What really concerns me, aside from what the minister said in the House today, is what he said when he went downstairs to the television room. What he asked us to believe is that certain high officials somewhere—there is some question as to where they were—took the view that it was the law of this country, that it was quite appropriate and legal, for a police force or a group of policemen to break into premises, remove the incriminating evidence or whatever they were looking for, make photocopies of it, and then put the original material back in place. This is supposed to be the law of the country.

Mr. Gillies: Watergate!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Richard Nixon believed the same thing and defended it until it caught up with him. I suspect that if this is the kind of conduct that is being defended by the Solicitor General, then he is not fit to occupy that post.

The other side of the question that is beginning to worry me even more is how much this government really knows, how true it is that they can honestly slough off this responsibility completely on to the RCMP. Is there a responsibility somewhere in the parliamentary law in this country, and indeed in any parliamentary jurisdiction, for a minister to have some responsibility for those who come under his jurisdiction? Can he honestly say that so-and-so acted illegally, but that the minister is not responsible? In that sense he has forfeited, I think, the credibility that he has as the Solicitor General, but, more important, as a minister of the Crown. Is there any Canadian anywhere, except perhaps in the House where we are bound to accept the statements by ministers, who believes that in a city like Ottawa, where the public service, national agencies such as the RCMP, cabinet ministers and the business community are always intercommunicating, there was no knowledge in the upper levels of government? I do not believe that there was no knowledge, although I must accept the minister's statement because that is our parliamentary practice.

There is a suspicion abroad that the government of Canada, by limiting the jurisdiction of the McDonald inquiry into the RCMP in such a way that it can only be directed to the RCMP and not into the question of the responsibility and the knowledge that government ministers had, was effecting the first steps of the cover-up of what is now coming out in dribs and drabs before the Canadian people, because this is the third instance. When will we hear about the fourth, the fifth and the