

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Winch: As a supplementary question, I ask the Minister of Justice whether or not the commissioner of the R.C.M.P. recommended the dismissal of the two men concerned?

Mr. Favreau: Mr. Speaker, if this is an allowable question would you ask that it be put on the order paper?

Mr. Winch: What have you got to hide, Mr. Minister?

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would think the minister would want to answer that question. Of course he had a discretion to exercise. I am frank to admit that, but whatever discretion is to be exercised by the cabinet is certainly something the house should know about. That does not imply any criticism to ask that question, but what was the order of the cabinet in that regard?

Mr. Favreau: Mr. Speaker, I think it is a matter of principle that the question should be ordered to be put on the order paper. It will be fully answered. There is, of course, nothing to hide, but it seems to be the type of practice and procedure followed by these hon. gentlemen across the way always to insinuate that, because we do not want to break the rules, we have something to hide.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I rise immediately on a question of privilege. I make it perfectly clear there was a discretion to be exercised by the minister and the cabinet. This is a matter of an appeal to them but strangely enough this government, with all the codes of decency and responsibility—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Diefenbaker:—strangely will not carry them out.

[*Later:*]

Mr. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a supplementary question to the Minister of Justice concerning the R.C.M.P. officers. Since the decision of cabinet would have to be reflected, I assume on the basis of an order in council, would he be willing to table that order in council in order to clarify the matter?

Mr. Favreau: It is not always with pleasure I answer the questions of the hon. member for Yukon but this time I will say yes with pleasure.

[Mr. Favreau.]

PRIVILEGE

RECEIPT OF LETTER FROM MEMBER FOR BRANDON-SOURIS

On the orders of the day:

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise on a question of privilege. This morning I indicated—and I rise now because the hon. gentleman is in his seat—that I had written a letter to the hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale) on December 14 and at the time of speaking I had not received a reply. I have checked into this and I find that when the house opened this morning no reply of any kind had been delivered to my box. Since that time, Mr. Speaker, two replies have been delivered. One was delivered to my office by hand and the other to my mailroom in the east block, stamped on December 18, 1964, 1.40 p.m.

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, on the same question of privilege and in view of the Prime Minister's distaste for innuendo I would like to reiterate once again that that letter left my office on December 15, on Tuesday last. If there is such confusion in the Prime Minister's office that he did not discover it, then it is not my fault.

[*Later:*]

Hon. J. R. Nicholson (Postmaster General): On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, during the last two or three minutes suggestions have been thrown across the floor of this chamber that there has been delay on the part of post office officials. Delays in postal services are to be expected at this time of year, but I think the house should know, especially the hon. gentlemen casting aspersions, that the post office in this building is the responsibility of the Speaker of the house, not the Postmaster General.

Mr. Speaker: In further explanation I would like to say the Speaker is overworked.

[*Later:*]

Hon. Paul Martineau (Pontiac-Témiscamingue): The Prime Minister referred to a statement concerning a letter he has received from the hon. member for Brandon-Souris. Since there is a considerable aura of mystery surrounding this letter I wonder whether the right hon. gentleman would mind tabling it or giving the house a summary of its contents.

Mr. Pearson: I would be very glad to table the letter and my reply.