

INFORMATION

VIEWS OF GORDON ROBERTSON ON GOVERNMENT SECRECY— GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, my question is supplementary to that posed by my hon. friend from Peace River and is addressed to the Prime Minister. It relates to a speech given by the Secretary to the Cabinet for federal-provincial relations on the subject of government secrecy. Will the right hon. gentleman tell the House whether it is government policy that, in the words of the Secretary to Cabinet, freedom of information is "directed by a curiosity about the internal processes of government which does not have much purpose behind it except curiosity" and, in addition, will he assure the House that Mr. Robertson is removed as far as possible from the formulation of government policy on information dissemination?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Robertson is regarded very highly by this government and by myself in particular. I should like to refer to the speech. I know Mr. Robertson sent me a copy but it is not fresh in my mind. I will see whether I find anything objectionable in the speech when taken in its entirety.

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AGRICULTURE

POWDERED SKIM MILK—REQUEST FOR REPORT ON SUPPLY SITUATION

Mr. Steven E. Paproski (Edmonton Centre): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Minister of Agriculture whether there is still a surplus of first grade powdered skim milk for human consumption and, if there is, what is the going price?

Some hon. Members: Order Paper!

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): I am not sure whether there is a surplus but I was told last week that practically no skim milk is going into storage; they were filling the market for advance orders.

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ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

ALLEGED ILLEGAL OPERATIONS OF BANK OF MONTREAL IN VANCOUVER—REQUEST FOR REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Solicitor General. I gave him notice a few days ago. On April 19, I asked the hon. gentleman to confirm that the commercial crime section in Vancouver was investigating alleged illegalities involving the operations of the Bank of Montreal in Vancouver as they have affected a constituent of mine, Mr. Larry McHale. The Solicitor General confirmed that this was the case and on June 23 stated during the adjournment debate that auditors were cur-

Privilege—Mr. W. Baker

rently examining books and records. The audits have been complete for some time, now, and I ask the Solicitor General whether it is the intention of his department to press charges in the near future.

● (1502)

Hon. Francis Fox (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, I understand that the matter is being reviewed by the crown attorney in order that a decision may be made as to whether or not a charge is warranted in this matter.

Mr. Friesen: A supplementary question. This has happened on several occasions in the past. Several times the attorney general has apparently referred a case back to the commercial crime section. Would the Solicitor General forward this matter with some urgency to the attorney general to make sure action is taken?

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, I am not too sure what type of action the hon. member would like to see taken, but the matter is being examined in as expeditious a fashion as possible.

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PRIVILEGE

MR. WALTER BAKER—PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE VIS-À-VIS SUPREME COURT OF ONTARIO JUDGMENT—RULING BY MR. SPEAKER

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Several days ago the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton raised, by way of a question of privilege, a matter concerning the recent decision of the Supreme Court of Ontario by the Chief Justice of that court, Chief Justice Evans. The specific motion of the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton is to be found at page 935 of *Hansard*, namely:

That the portions of the judgment of Chief Justice Evans of the Supreme Court of Ontario, given November 9, 1977, which appear to restrict the right of members of parliament to full and accurate reporting in the press, be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

It would, of course, be possible to take a very close technical stand on that motion and to indicate that it is too general to qualify for a question of privilege; but in fairness, the hon. member in his opening remarks, which are to be found on the previous page, cited the relevant part of the judgment of which he complained, which is as follows:

Following the authorities set out above, I have come to the conclusion that a member of parliament may utilize information proscribed by reg. 76-644 in parliament and may release that information to the media. However, I hold that the privilege of the member cannot be extended to protect the media if they choose to release the information to the public. Nor do I consider that the "real" and "essential" functions of a member include a duty or right to release information to constituents. The cases indicated that the privilege is finite and I would not be justified in extending the privilege to cover information released to constituents.

The hon. member for Grenville-Carleton put forward four submissions. First, he submitted that the judgment of Mr. Justice Evans, in its comments upon parliamentary privilege, are not in accordance with interpretations in this House on