

Oral Questions

The Solicitor General has said that if any information comes to him, he will report to the House immediately.

On May 19 the Solicitor General told the House, and I use his words:

The investigation couldn't find any evidence to the effect that some people could have profited from the budget leak.

It was revealed last week, when the House was not sitting, that Canadian National Railways signed a memorandum of understanding for a \$50 million deal to lease locomotives financed in part by Mutual Life of Canada, all this on April 26, and that CN subsequently backed out of the deal when it learned that advance knowledge of the federal budget might be involved.

Why, in the seven months since the Prime Minister gave his undertaking to the House of Commons that any new information would be brought to the attention of the House, was that information about the Canadian National leasing deal never made public by the Solicitor General or by any other member of the Government?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Blais (Solicitor General of Canada and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, we must remember that it is extremely important that any information that comes to the attention of any person, including opposition members, must be handed over immediately to the RCMP and investigated by that police force. I believe that in the circumstances, the important thing is that the RCMP has all the facts so that it can conduct a proper investigation, and that is what is happening now, Mr. Speaker.

• (1420)

[*English*]

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, that is no answer at all. Indeed, the RCMP had the information, at least on September 27, because according to a letter of that date from P. M. Cummins, the Director of National Security Investigations from the RCMP, reporting through his superiors to the Solicitor General: "Rumours relating to the intention of the government to increase taxes on leased equipment were emanating from Mutual's tax department in Waterloo, Ontario. This information was passed on to a consultant advising a Crown corporation which the following day, in anticipation of the tax increase, signed a letter of understanding

on April 26 for a multi-million dollar lease, financed in part by Mutual Life of Canada, which would have allowed a 13 per cent to 17 per cent pre-budget saving". Those are the words from the letter.

In other words, CN signed a deal the day before the Prime Minister made his undertaking to the House of Commons that any information would be brought immediately to the attention of the House. Does the government still claim that no one could have profited from the budget leak, and who were the financial consultants who arranged that deal for Canadian National Railways?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat perplexed by the line of questioning that the right hon. gentleman is following because he was alleging earlier today that there are allegations of political interference in the activities of the RCMP. Really what he is suggesting here is that we should be interfering with the process of the RCMP investigation.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mazankowski: Well, if hon. members opposite do not want to take it seriously, Mr. Speaker, I do and I think you do, Sir, and other members of this House want it. The hon. member talks about rumours; he talks about the potential of profit taking. If he has any evidence to suggest that there was profit taking, which would be contrary to and violating the spirit of the budget, he should come forth with that information, turn it over to the House of Commons, give it to me, give it to the RCMP. That is his responsibility. Why does he not start living up to it rather than being engaged in the kind of irresponsible rhetoric in which we have been engaged?

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): That is the most turgid smoke-screen this Deputy Prime Minister has ever tried to emit. The information was in the hands of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and, therefore, should have been in the hands of the Solicitor General and, therefore, should have been given to the House of Commons.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Come on. That is right. There is no information that I had to bring to the attention of this government; it had possession of this kind of document.