

Oral Questions

Mr. Woolliams: Surely if the Prime Minister will not answer and leaves us in a vacuum we are entitled to follow up.

Some hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Woolliams: We have been refused a judicial inquiry. I think we are entitled to some answers.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Woolliams: I think you've cut me off at a time when I was asking—

An hon. Member: Eldon, come on.

Mr. Woolliams: I can get louder. You take your own seat. I ask that the hon. member take his seat.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask that the hon. member take his seat.

Mr. Woolliams: I say to you, that I was precluded from asking questions.

Mr. Hees: Eldon, sit down.

Mr. Woolliams: I am entitled to another question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. member for Calgary North would resume his seat—

Mr. Woolliams: I have always been polite to every Speaker in this House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. member for Calgary North would resume his seat I would be pleased to tell him that any choice in granting supplementaries is only between him and one of his colleagues, and if he feels that he must have the floor against one of his colleagues, I am perfectly prepared to allow him another supplementary. The hon. member for Calgary North on a final supplementary.

Mr. Woolliams: Thank you very much.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Woolliams: My question to the Prime Minister is this: In light of the fact that the police went to the former solicitor general's office on November 6, 1972 and gave him certain information at that time, and that the former solicitor general had information about the break-in from the newspaper in question, does the Prime Minister feel that the then solicitor general acted with the kind of responsibility the Prime Minister would expect of any minister in this House under those circumstances?

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, I do, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Clark: Good Lord.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Trudeau: The former solicitor general was under severe attack in those days because it was alleged, particularly by Tory members, that he did not respect that great institution called the RCMP. He was the recipient of a complaint from a group, and hon. members can judge whether that group was a very reputable one. He was the recipient of a complaint about an illegal break-in. He did what most of us would do. He referred this to the police and asked them, "Is this a serious complaint?" He behaved as though he trusted the RCMP in asking whether he should answer this letter.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: They told him—and it is on record in writing—that he should not answer the letter. Hon. members can decide who is to blame, the former solicitor general or the RCMP, and they can carry on their accusations if they so desire.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: It may well be you.

● (1450)

BREAK-IN AT L'AGENCE DE PRESSE LIBRE—ACTION TAKEN BY MINISTER OF SUPPLY AND SERVICES

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Supply and Services based in part on a statement he made on June 2 also bearing in mind a precedent set by his colleagues, especially the hon. member for Westmount and others during questioning in the House on the judges' affair when ministers were allowed to answer areas of questioning other than their own particular responsibility. My question to the minister based on his statement of June 2 is whether he is in a position to tell the House as a result of his meeting with Commissioner Higgitt and Mr. John Starnes what steps he took when advised of the serious allegations of RCMP involvement in an illegal break-in? What steps did he take when he was given that information following his meeting with Commissioner Higgitt and Mr. Starnes on or about October 9? Who did he discuss it with and did he discuss it with any of his colleagues in cabinet?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The distinction that the question of the hon. member for St. John's East raises is with respect to questions that are put to ministers during an affair in which ministers, even in their present capacity, had taken some steps—in fact the questions were put to them about actions they had taken as ministers, not necessarily actions which related to their own administrative responsibility but steps which had been taken at the moment of the question in respect of their position as a minister.

Order, please. I think it would have been a totally unfair distinction for the Chair to have attempted to protect a minister with administrative responsibility while the minister was being questioned about steps he had in fact taken which were connected with his capacity as a minister, but not necessarily with his capacity in a particular ministry.