

Inquiries of the Ministry

I have a further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, since the minister is shy about answering that one. Can the Solicitor General exercise procedures to ensure that he is informed prior to and after any electronic surveillance or monitoring of the telephones or offices of Members of Parliament?

[Translation]

Mr. Goyer: Mr. Speaker, once again I have clearly indicated that there was no general policy. I have the greatest respect for the Speaker of the House and I will be ready to answer similar questions when the Chair has considered the problem raised yesterday by the members of the opposition.

[English]

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, I have a further supplementary question. The Solicitor General obviously does not appreciate his own responsibilities with respect to the RCMP. The RCMP does carry out this kind of activity, and I am not—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member cannot make a speech; he can ask a supplementary question. He has asked the question originally and he has asked a supplementary question. He now has the floor for the purpose of a further supplementary question, which is quite in order, but it should be a question.

Mr. Nielsen: Obviously the Solicitor General requires explanations before answering questions. Since he is responsible for the RCMP, can he assure the members of this House that he is exercising his responsibilities to ensure that he is informed both before and after any electronic surveillance or monitoring of telephones in the offices of Members of Parliament?

An hon. Member: Answer.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member can ask a further supplementary question, but the hon. member for Joliette also has a supplementary question to ask. For the moment the hon. member for Yukon has the floor.

Mr. Nielsen: I will try once again, Mr. Speaker. Is the Solicitor General prepared to assure the members of this House that the government is prepared to consider the policy that the Speaker of this House be fully apprised of and agreeable to any and all security activities in the parliament buildings by agents of the government?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest to the hon. member that at this stage he may be coming a little close to the position of the Speaker. He has asked a few questions. I recognize that there is a problem which is somewhat complicated, and I think the hon. member is right when he asks questions relating to the responsibility of the minister regarding the RCMP. Of course I would not want to get involved in a debate in any way, and this is why I did not intervene at an earlier point in the questions asked by the hon. member.

I recognize that there are two responsibilities, first, in respect of what goes on in this building, which is the responsibility of the Speaker and, second, what may go

[Mr. Nielsen.]

on in the administration of the federal police, which is the responsibility of the Solicitor General. I would suggest to the hon. member that perhaps the last supplementary question may not be quite in order because he is asking a question which perhaps might be related to the office of the Speaker. I want to assure the hon. member that the questions he has asked yesterday and today have been noted.

Mr. Nielsen: At the risk of being overly insistent, may I point out that I was directing my question to the Solicitor General and confining it to his responsibilities only. May I put it once more so that it may be clarified for Your Honour.

I am asking the Solicitor General whether he is prepared to assure the members of the House that the policy of the government will be to keep Your Honour informed and fully apprised as to any electronic surveillance or monitoring which is carried on by agents of the government, and particularly by those for whom the Solicitor General has specific responsibility, namely, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police?

Mr. Speaker: Again I have to rule that the question is out of order. I must suggest to the hon. member that what he is asking for is in a way hypothetical or theoretical. He is inviting the minister to indicate what the reply would be to inquiries that would be made of him by the Chair, and in this respect the question goes beyond the limitations of a question that may be asked at this time. The hon. member for Joliette.

Mr. Nielsen: On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, affecting the privileges of all hon. members of the House, perhaps Your Honour might permit the Acting Prime Minister to assure members of the House that this whole matter will be referred for inquiry to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections. I put that question to the Acting Prime Minister.

[Later:]

Mr. Donald MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a supplementary question to the Solicitor General. Would he explain his use of the word "precedent" last night when he was referring to this matter of electronic bugging? He referred to a precedent. Would he explain that to the House?

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[Translation]

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

ALLEGED BUGGING BY ELECTRONIC DEVICE OF RESIDENCE OF ST. JEAN-BAPTISTE SOCIETY OFFICIAL

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, I hope I will get a clear answer. I must make a new attempt and ask a direct question of the Solicitor General. Once again, expecting him to be as precise, I ask him if the RCMP did or did not instal a wiretapping device in the residence of Mr. Cossette and in the affirmative, when will it be asked to remove it?