

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I hoped this question was important enough that it would not descend into the political arena, something the hon. member is seeking to bring about.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: You started it.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Speaker: Order. It seems to me that this is not very helpful. I would think that the minister who has just spoken did not indicate that he had a question of privilege. This is, again, a point of debate. The minister has invited debate in the same way as the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands has done, and I think it would be as well at this point if I were to recognize the hon. member for Egmont.

WAR MEASURES ACT ARRESTS—SUGGESTED USE OF
INDEPENDENT OBSERVERS

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Bearing in mind the resolution recently presented to the federal government and the government of Quebec by the Canadian Council of Churches, may I ask whether the Minister of Justice has yet had an opportunity to consult with the provincial Attorney General as to the possibility of following up the suggestion that independent observers be allowed access to people held in custody so that there may be a minimum of future embarrassment or difficulty created because of prolonged or unnecessary detention?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Justice): I relayed that suggestion to the office of the Attorney General this morning along with the suggestion made yesterday by the right hon. member for Prince Albert.

[Translation]

WAR MEASURES ACT—OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN LETTERS
TO PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister.

Considering I am receiving hundreds of letters from all parts of Canada congratulating the government on its position in the present situation, could the Prime Minister tell us whether he himself is getting a considerable number of letters—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Caouette: There is no oh's or ah's about it. I want to know whether he is getting a great number of letters from all parts of Canada expressing the opinion of the general public, not that of the crackpots who are in Parliament.

23226—30½

Inquiries of the Ministry

[English]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The situation is not improving. I will now take a chance with the hon. member for South Shore.

[Translation]

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Témiscamingue will have to wait a moment. I have already recognized the hon. member for South Shore.

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[English]

PROVINCIAL AFFAIRS

NEW BRUNSWICK ELECTION—OPPORTUNITY TO VOTE FOR
CAMP GAGETOWN TROOPS ON DUTY OUTSIDE
PROVINCE

Mr. Lloyd R. Crouse (South Shore): I shall direct my question to the Minister of National Defence, Mr. Speaker. At the present time New Brunswick troops are out of Camp Gagetown on duty in Quebec. Has the minister made any provision for absentee voting by servicemen on duty outside their own province? If not, what action will be taken to ensure that New Brunswick soldiers are not disenfranchised in the forthcoming election?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of National Defence): This question relates to the right to vote and the provisions which allow for absentee voting or the service vote. It is a matter entirely for the law of New Brunswick and it is therefore not within the power of the federal government or this Parliament to change the provisions of that law so that these people may vote. I did indicate when I was in Gagetown yesterday that the primary consideration was that soldiers should be in a position to discharge the duties they are now discharging in the interest of national security. But if, as I sincerely hope, it is possible in the very near future to bring some of the men back to the Canadian Forces Bases we shall make a particular effort to get the RCR back to Gagetown so that they will be able to vote next Monday.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL SECURITY

QUEBEC—WAR MEASURES ACT—SUGGESTED FREE VOTE
AMONG UNION MEMBERS

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I am back again, not with a statement, but with a question for the Prime Minister.

According to this morning's news, the union leaders Pépin, Laberge and Carbonneau are requesting immediate suspension of application of the War Measures Act in order, they claim, to save democracy.

In view of these people's claim that they are speaking on behalf of their membership, which, incidentally, is unfounded, does the Prime Minister intend to suggest that those three feather-brained characters hold a free