

Oral Questions

knew that a crime had been committed? Also, what steps will he take to establish a clear objective and impartial inquiry into the operations of the office of the Solicitor General of Canada?

Hon. Francis Fox (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that instead of asking questions the hon. member wishes to act as a judge and, in the absence of due process, condemn people who have entered into certain activities. As far as we, on this side of the House are concerned, we are ready to let the due process of law take place. We believe that the proper person to decide whether someone is guilty or not is a judge who has heard all the evidence or all the facts.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Fox: The hon. member also asked about a possible conflict of interest between my office and that of the present Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. It is quite clear that on this side of the House we have wanted to ensure that there is not even the slightest appearance of conflict of interest and that is why we have set up a commission of inquiry which has all the powers necessary to examine any illegal acts committed by the RCMP. Also, in spite of what members of the opposition have said and in spite of what the editorial said in the *Globe and Mail* this morning, the commission has the power to call the appropriate ministers before it. I might add that the appropriate ministers, both the Minister of Supply and Services and the present Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs have already indicated publicly their intention to respond to any request to appear in front of that commission.

● (1432)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ALLEGED ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES—REASON FOR DELAY IN
INFORMING QUEBEC POLICE AUTHORITIES

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): I have a question for the Solicitor General as well, Mr. Speaker. It concerns the obstruction of justice, not on the part of his predecessors, but of himself. I should like to ask the minister why, having learned of the RCMP involvement in arson and theft, two very serious offences, and having informed the Macdonald Royal Commission in the middle of July of this year about such activity, he took more than two months before getting in touch with the police authorities in the Province of Quebec to inform them of the same activity.

Hon. Francis Fox (Solicitor General): The answer to that question is quite clear. It is interesting to note that the leader of the New Democratic Party accuses me of having obstructed justice when I have brought the matter to the attention of the royal commission of inquiry which he, among others, requested should be set up. We set up a royal commission of inquiry in order that there might be an independent, impartial body to look into these various allegations. We thought it would be improper for the RCMP to conduct a complete investigation of

[Mr. McGrath.]

those matters. We also thought it would be regarded by members of this House as an obstruction of justice if the RCMP had gone outside the force to interview, for instance, former members or other persons who might be involved in those acts.

For these reasons we referred the matter to the Macdonald Commission, but as we had some evidence coming forward of illegal acts we thought it would be proper to refer the matter to the Attorney General of the Province of Quebec. I find it rather an astounding proposition to hold that in cases where we have referred these facts both to a federal royal commission and to the Attorney General of the Province of Quebec that the hon. member would have the gall to talk about obstruction of justice.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, we on this side can put up with just so much rhetorical baloney. I have no objection to his informing the royal commission. The whole point of the question is that when the minister found out that there had been criminal wrongdoing involving arson and theft he took more than two months to inform the correct police authority so that they might investigate and prosecute. That is the question.

Mr. Fox: I answered the question previously—

Some hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Fox:—I would point out to the hon. member that in the course of the debate during the month of June when I was saying that these questions involving criminal acts ought to be handled at the provincial level, the hon. member was telling us we were sending the RCMP to the dogs by confining them to a provincial commission of inquiry. The facts are there. We have referred the matter to police authorities. There are other allegations which have been made against the force and they have all been referred to the royal commission in order that they may produce the evidence. If they do come up with evidence, I would expect them to talk to me and to advise me to which attorney general I should refer it.

BREAK-IN AT L'AGENCE DE PRESSE LIBRE—REQUEST FOR
VERIFICATION OF LETTER INFORMING MINISTER OF EVENT

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): You have not answered the question! Rarely have I heard such blatant nonsense from a lawyer. It is just rubbish. My last question concerns his predecessor but it must be put to the Solicitor General because, in accordance with the rules of the House, his predecessor cannot answer. The former solicitor general, the present Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, said in the House that he did not learn of the break-in of the office of L'Agence de Presse Libre which took place in the fall of 1972 until March of 1976. I was informed yesterday that a letter, signed by the Director General of Security, was sent to the then solicitor general on December 19, 1972 providing information about the break-in that fall. In view of the serious contradiction between those two alleged sets of facts, would