

information and an answer providing it. If there is to be a use of the question period, perhaps we can proceed; but if we are to continue with the debate, then the debate ought to take place on the legislation.

● (1420)

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, what we have departed from, and what we departed from long ago with this government, is the practice of giving information to the House of Commons.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: What I want to know, and what the people of Canada want to know, is why this government refuses to get serious about fighting organized crime.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: Why does it refuse to call an inquiry into organized crime in this country?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, it was reported to this House in 1975 that the inability of the police to deal with organized crime was a clear and always present danger. I quote from a report tabled in this House to which the government responded by means of legislation—

An hon. Member: Like capital punishment.

Mr. Basford:—which needs to be passed, on the recommendation of every police force in this country. The Leader of the Opposition prefaced one of his questions with reference to the so-called Five Dragons. If he wishes to direct that question to the Solicitor General he will receive an answer about the Five Dragons.

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice will obviously hide behind anything he can.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: What we want to know—and it is a simple question—is why the Minister of Justice will not do his duty and call an inquiry into organized crime in this country, so that we might take all the action necessary to fight it.

ORGANIZED CRIME—WIRETAPPING LEGISLATION TO COMBAT—
REQUEST FOR ROYAL COMMISSION STUDY

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, the only answer given to the Leader of the Opposition by the Minister of Justice was that Bill C-51 should pass. Bill C-51 excludes 11 million long guns and it changes the law in reference to wiretapping slightly. I ask the minister this question: In light of the fact that in 1976 there were 1,062 people wiretapped and imprisoned, and in light of the fact that of

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those 1,062 persons there were only 13 convictions, is that the minister's serious answer to controlling crime?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and his colleagues remind me of the legal story: if you have a bad case, make lots of noise.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: You should know.

An hon. Member: Louder.

Mr. Hees: That is why you have been shouting.

Mr. Basford: The figures to which the hon. gentleman refers were explained in the second reading debate on that bill.

Mr. Woolliams: They certainly were not.

Mr. Basford: Obviously, authorizations obtained in one year do not lead to arrests or convictions in that year, but in subsequent years. Those figures were carefully documented by the Solicitor General in the second reading debate on the bill.

Mr. Woolliams: We have heard that answer before, and I notice the Solicitor General has changed that answer. This report is by His Excellency the Governor General of Canada, and it does not deal with that. I want to repeat, there were 1,062 phones wiretapped, and only 13 convictions. A royal commission would permit witnesses to be called and subpoenaed by the police.

In light of the fact that a royal commission inquiry into crime would permit documents to be subpoenaed, read and produced, which would lead to charges being laid and result in convictions, will the minister not reconsider his position, in view of the answer he gave me on September 17, 1975, when I pressed this matter forward in the House in reference to the crime commission inquiry going on in the province of Quebec, at which time he said that the provinces were handling it? Does he recommend ten royal commissions to be started in Canada, or will he take his responsibility under the BNA Act which calls for criminal law to fall under his jurisdiction?

Mr. Basford: I indicated yesterday that on these matters which involve the administration of justice I would, of course, consult the attorneys general. The Solicitor General and I have also consulted from time to time members of the RCMP, who feel that there are far more effective measures of getting investigations, charges, prosecutions and incarcerations carried out than by way of a royal commission. It is seldom that I agree with the *Globe and Mail*, but this morning it says, in an editorial referring to the Attorney General—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: Next day it will be the *Toronto Sun*.