

Oral Questions

[Translation]

ALLEGED PAYMENT OF WITNESSES FOR TESTIMONY—
GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Gilles Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Solicitor General.

Could the Solicitor General indicate to the House whether it is common practice for the RCMP to pay out rather large amounts of money to witnesses who are to appear in court? In the affirmative, who is responsible for paying such amounts?

Hon. Francis Fox (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, it is not common practice for the RCMP to pay out money to witnesses who are to appear in courts. There are times, however, when we must relocate individuals in other parts of Canada whose lives are threatened because of their willingness to testify in the interest of the administration of justice, especially where organized crime is involved, and we must assume our responsibilities.

Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

Could the Solicitor General indicate, in the case of individuals who are behind bars, the maximum amount which may be spent for protecting them?

Mr. Fox: If the hon. member has a precise case in mind, he should come out with it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I have a final supplementary question.

It is rather common practice, and I should like to ask the Solicitor General who paid out \$25,000 to Frederic Thomas Ford, in British Columbia, and whether a promise was really made by the RCMP to pay out to him \$60,000 to appear as a witness in court?

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, no promise is ever made. As to the precise case the hon. member is referring to, I shall certainly make inquiry and report to him at a later date.

[English]

PARTI QUÉBÉCOIS BREAK-IN—REASON PRIME MINISTER DID
NOT ASCERTAIN HOW MEMBERSHIP LISTS OBTAINED

Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct my questions to the right hon. Prime Minister. They relate to the matter brought up just a few moments ago by the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby. I am sure that the Prime Minister realizes that while I am not attacking the credibility of what he is saying I certainly want to give him the opportunity at this point of improving on the credibility of what he just told the House a little while ago. I mean that fairly and most sincerely, Mr. Speaker.

My question is this: Last week he could not remember when exactly this conversation took place with his security people. He said it was either 1974 or 1975. He now tells us that the new mandate came out in March, 1975, so it was obviously prior to that, because it was as a result of the conversation that

[Mr. Fox.]

the new mandate came out. Would the Prime Minister tell the House just how the whole subject matter came up in relation to the so-called surveillance of the PQ, the matter that he was most surprised about? We are not talking about terrorism, we are not talking about an atom bomb in the middle of a city—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I am putting my question to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker: The question has been put.

Some hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Lawrence: My question is, when he was so surprised about this particular matter, did he not ask them what form that surveillance was taking, how they obtained the information that they had, and what was the result of that surveillance? Was it not in the form of lists?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, in the course of contacts between the security service, cabinet and myself, particularly since the events of October 1970, when there had been terrorism, murder and kidnapping, we directed the RCMP—and I believe this was the will of the House—to pay a little more attention to internal subversion caused by ideological sources in Canada and not only concentrate on externally sponsored types of subversion.

It then became obvious that one of the groups they were going to look at was one composed of those who were trying to break this country, separate it, and who had been using force in order to do it. There was a great deal of indignation on the part of members opposite, and indeed many people across the country, because at the time of the October, 1970, events, the police had to throw a very wide net indeed and arrest many people who were apparently guilty of nothing because the police were misinformed. They did not have inside information on the terrorists, those who had kidnapped Mr. Cross and Mr. Laporte. So obviously we told them—we did not have to tell them because they would have done it by themselves—to concentrate a little more on this threat. So I suppose that as a result of that they began infiltrating the FLQ and they began trying to get more information on those who would destroy the country by force, whether they be in Quebec or in other parts of the country.

● (1442)

Mr. Clark: The Parti Québécois?

Mr. Trudeau: I repeat, Mr. Speaker, it was not my objective, and it is not still today, to ask the police how they went about getting information. I would bet my bottom dollar that it was not the practice of the right hon. member for Prince Albert when he was prime minister to intervene in the day to day operations of the security service. They came to us with information. If it was relevant to the security of the state, we tried to take action on it. I never made a practice of asking where they got their information and I shall not begin that