

Oral Questions

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Northumberland-Durham.

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ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

INQUIRIES BY MINISTER CONCERNING TAMPERING WITH MAIL BY SECURITY SERVICE—TYPES OF CASES INVOLVED

Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Solicitor General. I am addressing it to him in order to give him an opportunity to clarify what he said a little while ago. Regardless of what he has referred to the McDonald Commission, or when he referred to the McDonald Commission, both of which questions are very vague, in view of the serious allegations, allegations which if true are intolerable in this nation, made last night on national television and again this morning in the national media, can the minister please tell me whether he asked his officials this morning whether they knew of any circumstances whatever involving tampering with Her Majesty's mails in Canada.

Hon. Francis Fox (Solicitor General): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Lawrence: My supplementary, in the light of that very full answer, is this: Just what was the reply the Solicitor General received from his officials when I suspect he knows and certainly his officials know, that there have been previous instances brought to the floor of this House by members at which time his predecessors simply evaded the same type of question as he is answering here today.

Mr. Fox: I find it difficult to accept the hon. member's conclusion that I evaded the question put to me by the hon. member for Central Nova. I indicated clearly that I sat down with senior officials of the force this morning, asked them to produce their files, asked them a number of questions on procedural operations and it became very clear to me during the course of that meeting that there had been indeed a number of instances in which the security service of the RCMP in particular areas of counterespionage, terrorism and countersubversion opened a number of pieces of mail. I also told the hon. member that as far as the RCMP files show, this type of procedure goes back to 1954.

Mr. Lawrence: Bearing in mind that the RCMP themselves have publicly admitted that they have absolutely no authority to do that at all, is the minister telling us now that as the minister responsible he is assuring the House that this has only been done in cases of alleged terrorism or alleged bombing or counterespionage. Is he saying that these four types of cases are the only ones which have been reported to him.

Mr. Fox: As the hon. member knows, this matter came to light only last night. I do not think our examination of the whole matter is complete. The initial response I have had from the force, the initial breakdown of the cases which have occurred, is to the effect that they all come under the classification of counterespionage, countersubversion and terrorism.

[Mr. Graffey.]

As far as the government is concerned, no matter what heading it comes under it is not authorized either by the Official Secrets Act or the Post Office Act and in these circumstances we feel the matter has to be referred to the commission of inquiry set up by the federal government in view of the fact that mail has been opened and we wish to apprise the royal commission of the circumstances in which the mail was opened. Hopefully, the royal commission will have some suggestions to make as a result of that very serious presentation.

An hon. Member: Another illegality.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

MEASURES TO AID EMPLOYEES AFFECTED BY CHANGE IN VALUE OF CANADIAN DOLLAR

Mr. Robert McCleave (Halifax-East Hants): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. What steps if any, other than prayer, has the government taken to help Canadians serving abroad in the employment of Canada who are affected by the changes in the fortunes of the Canadian dollar.

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I would be the last to question the efficacy of prayer, but apart from that we are examining each individual case; we do have certain formulas in place on a continuing basis to deal with fluctuations in currency values. Just last week, for instance, there were quite substantial changes in Israel. We look at these cases individually as they come along and do our best to accommodate our people to them. I should point out that they also, on occasion, benefit when currency values move in the opposite direction.

Mr. McCleave: I think I shall have to make a late show appointment. I really have in mind the situation in Washington.

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[Translation]

MANPOWER

REASON APPROVAL OF CERTAIN CANADA WORKS PROJECTS DELAYED

Mr. Irénée Pelletier (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Since most Canada Works projects in provinces other than Quebec have already been accepted in more than 85 per cent of cases, could the minister tell the House why such a long delay is required this year to consider projects submitted to the Quebec government?

Hon. Bud Cullen (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, last week several members asked me the reason for this situation and I decided that the approval