

Oral Questions

the conflicting testimony that we have coming from the Minister of Supply and Services pertaining to the time when he was solicitor general compared with what former commissioner Higgitt has said, and concerning the degree of knowledge that the then solicitor general had about the break-in, I would like to ask the present Solicitor General if he will not make it a mandatory requirement that the political accountability aspect of this case be investigated instead of, as he well knows, leaving open the possible occurrence of such an investigation.

[Translation]

Hon. Francis Fox (Solicitor General): Because, Mr. Speaker, we have set up—once again, unfortunately, it seems that I have to repeat myself—we have set up an independent commission of inquiry presided over by a justice of the Supreme Court of Alberta who has been directed to go thoroughly over the matter. Of course, this commission of inquiry will want to examine the allegations. I am not going to tell it how to proceed. The commission of inquiry will consider the allegations and if it decides that there was some illegal action, it will no doubt want to examine the matter thoroughly to determine exactly whether or not there was some covering up. I hope that those comments answer the question of the hon. member.

[English]

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, as a lawyer surely the minister knows that is soporific nonsense.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Broadbent: He has just said to the House that it is possible that the inquiry will look into this. He has not said it is mandatory, and surely that is what we have a right to expect.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: Would the minister tell the House why he would object to including a clause—if he is really sincere that he believes the commission should, which is what he wants us to believe, look into all aspects of the question—indicating that one of the requirements of the commission is to investigate and report on the adequacy of accountability procedures in order to ensure effective authority over the RCMP by the elected government of the day? I ask that question in light of the minister's own expressed views about alleged concern and those of his own Prime Minister.

[Translation]

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, as far as I am concerned, it is inconceivable that the commission would refuse to examine the case mentioned by the hon. member. I understand that, on his side of the House, the hon. member thinks there are some hesitations, and sees some problems with respect to the RCMP's accountability to the government. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that this question could also be studied by the commission if it wants to make recommendations under clause C of the terms of reference.

[Mr. Broadbent.]

On our part, Mr. Speaker, as government and Solicitor General, if we find we have not enough control or there is a lack of accountability from the RCMP towards the Solicitor General, we will introduce the necessary amendments and fill our role as a government. Then, we do not need the Leader of the Opposition or any other organization to remind us what we have to do. We are prepared to hear suggestions from any circle, provided these suggestions are rational and logical, but we intend to carry out our responsibilities in that area and in others as well.

[English]

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, with all respect, in the last answer the minister said it was possible that the inquiry would look into these things. The answer he just gave is that it is inconceivable that it will not. The minister cannot have it both ways. Either it is possible or it is inconceivable that the commission will not do otherwise. In a private conversation the minister and I had in the House yesterday—and in a sense I hesitate to bring it up—the minister indicated to me the words he used in one answer, namely, that it is possible under clause C of the terms of reference that the commission would look into such matters. If the minister believes it is only possible and if he wants to maintain—as he is doing, on the other hand—that it is important that the commission look into these questions, then why in God's name does the minister not make it mandatory by putting it into the terms of reference?

[Translation]

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the hon. member has not grasped what I was meaning. In my opinion, it is inconceivable that the commission of inquiry would not look into the APLQ matter. That matter is mentioned in the first clause of the commission's terms of reference. As for matters of procedure, accountability and suggestion of authority over the RCMP by the Solicitor General, it is precisely under clause C that the commission could decide to make recommendations about it. It is highly possible, despite what the opposition member thinks, that the commission would find that the control mechanisms with the changes we will propose in September are perfectly sufficient for this period of 1977.

* * *

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

INQUIRY AS TO SEARCH FOR CANADIAN JOURNALIST MISSING IN UGANDA

Mr. Léonel Beaudoin (Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Acting Prime Minister.

In view of the fact that the President of Uganda, Marshall Idi Amin Dada represents a menace for the world on account of his cruelty, because according to one of his former ministers, he put to death more than 100,000 of his fellow countrymen; that a Canadian newspaperman is reported missing in Uganda and this country has not given any satisfactory explanation about his disappearance; can the Acting Prime Minister inform the House whether there is any news about this missing Canadian, whether active search is being conducted by responsible people? Where does the matter stand?