

RCMP Informants

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I tried, as I am sure others did, to follow closely what the minister said. I had some difficulty in doing so because the subject is complex and the matter of great seriousness and consequence. We wanted to be sure that we understood correctly every phrase he used. Regretfully this was not possible in listening to the minister whether in the official language with which I am familiar or through the translation system. Like the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams), I think it would have been much more appropriate and much more generous if the minister had followed the practice established some years ago by previous governments and other cabinet ministers by making his statement available in advance to opposition members so that the same care and precision could be given to the responses as were given to the preparation of the minister's statement.

● (11:30 a.m.)

One thing the minister's statement proves is that perhaps the best policemen in this nation are not in the police forces but outside of it, those who are supplying information in the manner that the minister admitted has been followed in this and other cases. One point I tried to raise earlier in connection with this case is that by using young people as informers, whether they are of statutory age or not, and paying them for information the RCMP is participating in the seduction of these persons into a type of activity which places their lives in jeopardy. We all know the value which those in the underworld or on the fringe of the underworld place on the life of an informer, and the propriety of the RCMP engaging in an activity of this type warrants examination from the moral point of view.

Had it not been for the disclosures made by Mr. Eadie on television, this matter might never have come to light. I am not surprised, incidentally, that what he said was not considered to be factual and that the minister has had to refute him point by point because, as the minister knows, one cannot place a great deal of credence upon what a paid informer says; maybe the CBC did not pay him enough to tell the whole truth. In any event, had it not been for Mr. Eadie disclosing the fact that he had been a paid informer the minister and the government would never have been in the position of having to disclose what had taken place and would no doubt have continued to keep the subject matter secret and have denied the circumstances at every opportunity as the minister did on a previous occasion.

This brings us to the point I raised on an earlier occasion concerning the necessity of conducting a counterbalancing examination into practices of this sort. I can think of nobody more appropriate than the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, consisting, as it does, of representatives of all parties of the House all of whom are equally concerned about the security of the nation, the dangers of criminality and the position the RCMP occupies in the eyes of the public as an agency enforcing the law.

It might well be that if the minister took the step of referring this matter to the committee meetings would have to be held in camera. Naturally so. A lot of the information which the police have in their possession should not be divulged to the public, since part of the

[Mr. Woolliams.]

public is involved in the criminal world. I am sure nobody serving on the committee would object to such information being provided in camera. But it seems to me that for the RCMP itself, which took the initial steps to employ this informer and undoubtedly is still doing so, to carry out an examination of its own conduct and present it to the minister with the words, "this is what we have discovered about our own conduct", is really not fairly balanced regardless of how valuable we think the commissioner is, or anything of that sort. We need another kind of examination. I believe that the parliamentary committee, which I am sure has as much integrity contained within it as the minister, would be an appropriately balanced group to examine this matter and other types of conduct by the RCMP and maybe even by the minister's own secret force of which he is so proud.

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[Translation]

CRIMINAL CODE

AMENDMENT RESPECTING FALSE FIRE ALARMS

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-267, to amend the Criminal Code (false alarm of fire—penalty).

Some hon. Members: Explain.

Mr. Prud'homme: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to increase the penalty to be imposed on those who are found guilty of such an offence and, at the same time, to counteract the propensity some people have for ringing false alarms.

This bill will also have a psychological impact in that it will draw public attention on the seriousness of such a futile gesture as ringing false alarms. As a matter of fact, in the city of Montreal alone, more than 6,000 false alarms have been rung in the last year; this represents a very grave danger for both the firemen and the whole of the population.

Motion agreed to, bill read the first time and ordered to be printed.

[English]

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

UNEMPLOYMENT—FURTHER IMMEDIATE MEASURES TO CREATE JOBS—ASSISTANCE TO OLD AGE PENSIONERS BECAUSE OF COST OF LIVING INCREASE

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Acting Prime Minister a question. In view of the fact that it is impossible for me to have any confidence in the judgment of the Minister of Finance or to regard the Minister of Manpower and Immigration as anything more than an apologist for the government—

Some hon. Members: Question!