

Supply—Solicitor General

the house what action he has taken with regard to those complaints from the province of Quebec?

Is the R.C.M.P. working openly and co-operating wholeheartedly with the various police forces or the Department of Justice of the province of Quebec?

It is very important that there should be some understanding and liaison between the various law enforcement agencies in Canada, for instance between the Quebec Provincial Police, the R.C.M.P. and even the municipal police forces. There must be some co-ordination in the administration of justice, not only in Quebec but throughout the country.

But with regard to the matter which is of particular interest to us—because the complaints came directly from the Quebec Minister of Justice and the Solicitor General and high officials of the R.C.M.P. are aware of them—is the department taking action to ensure greater co-operation and understanding between the R.C.M.P. and the Quebec Department of Justice?

[English]

Mr. Pennell: I made inquiries along these lines following the federal-provincial conference on crime. I was very impressed by the report I received that at the working level there was very good co-operation between the members of the forces. Following that conference, a committee was set up by the representatives of the governments concerned, of the Quebec provincial police, the Ontario provincial police and the R.C.M.P., to see how they could work in close co-operation with regard to a central intelligence bureau. This committee has met at least twice. There was to have been a third meeting last week but it was postponed because certain officers had to be here for the estimates. I understand these meetings will be resumed very shortly.

The Chairman: Shall item 1 carry?

Some hon. Members: Carried.

[Translation]

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Chairman, I rise on a point of order. When you called vote No. 1, you did not notice that the hon. member for Trois-Rivières (Mr. Mongrain) was up and that he had something to say or questions to ask probably on that item.

[English]

The Chairman: I apologize to the hon. member for Trois-Rivières. I call on the hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

[Translation]

Mr. Mongrain: Mr. Chairman, I cannot blame you because we, independents, are far removed from you and have not learned as yet how to indicate our presence by noisy interventions, but we will.

I should not like to extend the debate, nor make the life of the Solicitor General more difficult because I know that it is not easy, but there is a principle at stake in the question I should like to put to him.

A few weeks ago I wrote to the Minister of Justice, but I am under the impression that my letter was passed to the Solicitor General.

I pointed out the case of a citizen from Trois-Rivières, who was taken to the R.C.M.P.'s office a few weeks ago and kept there for about 12 hours. In the course of the interrogation, even though that citizen was only in custody because no charges had been laid, and he had to be presumed innocent, until further proof to the contrary, he was beaten up to such a degree that he lost consciousness and had to be under the doctor's care.

I know the Solicitor General would not tolerate that treatment known as the third degree, which goes back to the middle ages. I know it is no longer permitted in the R.C.M.P.

If I raise the question, it is not so much to insist upon an immediate answer from the minister, because it is my impression that an inquiry is being made about that. I merely ask the minister to give strict instructions to all members of the R.C.M.P. so that no rough treatment be given to persons suspected of wrong-doing, even if they are found guilty, but above all if they have not been proven guilty. This is quite unacceptable.

I wish to insist on a letter I wrote asking that an inquiry be made and, if the prisoner is found guilty, as I think he will be, that sanctions be applied, and also that strict and clear instructions be given to the whole R.C.M.P. so that rough bodily treatment be prohibited when constables have to question someone who is merely a suspect and could very well be innocent.

• (4:50 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. Pennell: Mr. Chairman, I am certainly concerned at a suggestion that a citizen was held by the R.C.M.P., questioned for some time and not charged. The allegation that he was struck adds to my concern, and I shall certainly look into the matter.

The Chairman: Shall vote No. 1 carry?