

Oral Questions

protect the RCMP. He would have been well advised to start that two weeks ago.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

SUGGESTION OFFICERS ACCUSED OF WITHHOLDING
INFORMATION APPEAR BEFORE COMMITTEE

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Acting Prime Minister's third answer is not consistent with his first answer. Would he be prepared to give us a guarantee now that those members of the RCMP, who have been accused by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs of withholding information from him, and to quote him, "other solicitors general", will be allowed to come before either a special committee of this House or the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates in order for them to defend themselves before parliament regarding the accusations made against them by a minister of the Crown?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it was at the request of the opposition that the government decided in the summer to have an inquiry into the matter, and we have established the McDonald Commission. The former solicitor general will be there—

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Shame!

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Justice McDonald and members of the commission will have an opportunity to question the former solicitor general and everyone involved in it. I do not think the national security of the nation will gain anything by debating that in a committee of the House.

CONTRADICTORY REMARKS CONCERNING INCINERATING OF
FILES—REQUEST FOR EXPLANATION

Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham): Mr. Speaker, my question is supplementary to the question of what is said inside and outside the House about the security service. Last June the Solicitor General was very definite in some remarks he made in the House concerning the burning of some security files. Last night he was quoted in the media as saying something quite different, as I understood it. I wonder if he could explain this contradiction to the House now?

Hon. Francis Fox (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, I would be delighted to have the hon. member say where I was quoted in the media as saying something different from what I said in the House.

An hon. Member: The CBC.

Mr. Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, my understanding of quotations last night on the CBC indicated that certain files, which should be available to the McDonald Commission and should

[Mr. Chrétien.]

be available also to the special committee of this House investigating this matter, if one is called, have been destroyed, irretrievably lost. This was the import of the media report last night on television and also in the daily press. This is quite contradictory of the statement by the minister on June 21, 1977, which reads in part as follows:

... the files were incinerated in accordance with the normal policy of the force ... these files dated back to the year 1966. However, I am informed that any information that was pertinent was transferred to the National Criminal Investigations Unit of the RCMP.

● (1422)

That certainly sounded like a direct contradiction. If I am wrong, I am certainly very pleased to have the minister correct it.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, as far as I am concerned, I had not been interviewed by the CBC National News last night. Perhaps the hon. member is referring to another statement that may have come out of Montreal which I believe the leader of the New Democratic Party attributed to an officer of the force in Montreal. As far as I am concerned, the statement I made in the House in response to the question on June 21 was as a result of inquiries I made with the force at that time. I have not been advised of any changes made with regard to what I indicated at that time.

NAME OF OFFICER INFORMING MINISTER OF INCINERATION OF
FILES

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, the minister referred to some things I used earlier in today's proceedings. I have had that checked out. I am informed that the head of the criminal investigation branch of the RCMP in Montreal, a man by the name of Marcoux, said the following: He could not be sure some of the documents burned on June 3 did not refer to alleged illegal activity of the RCMP. On June 21 the minister assured the House none of the documents burned on that day, not the previous day, pertained in any way to the inquiry. The minister also said the documents burned had no value. You could not have a more flagrant contradiction.

This is an extremely serious matter which affects the federal inquiry as well as the provincial inquiry. I am sure the minister did not deliberately misinform the House last year. The other implication is that someone in his department, presumably at a very high level, misinformed the minister. Can he now inform the House who told him last June the information that he conveyed? Did he check it out this morning in light of this very serious contradictory statement made by a senior RCMP official in Montreal?

Hon. Francis Fox (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, I am not completely convinced that a contradictory statement has been made by a senior police officer in Montreal. The hon. member has drawn my attention to a statement allegedly made by Mr. Marcoux in Montreal yesterday. I will be pleased to check it out. As far as I am concerned, information I gave to