

Organized Crime

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Speaker, I was wondering whether, with the consent of the House, I might be permitted to put a question to the minister.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): The minister's time has not yet expired. Will he accept a question from the hon. member?

Mr. Fox: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Speaker, I will preface my question by saying that I am in favour of a federal royal commission to investigate crime. In his presentation the minister left the impression that a royal commission would be harmful because it would upset investigations by various police forces across the country. I ask him this question and I hope he is as honest as he is pious. Does he think what came out of the royal commission in the province of Quebec was positive, or negative?

● (1620)

Mr. Fox: Perhaps I could answer the hon. member's question by putting another question. Would he like to tell me how many new prosecutions arose out of the inquiry into organized crime in Montreal? That was, of course, a decision taken by the attorney general of Quebec, as was his right. He came to the conclusion that in the circumstances an inquiry in that province would be useful. Undoubtedly it had some value, but perhaps the hon. member would like to tell me how many new prosecutions were entered upon as a result of it.

Mr. Stanfield: There's a brave Solicitor General.

Mr. Fox: The hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Stanfield) appears to have some comments to make. There was only one case that I can think of. It was the one into the tainted meat business in that province. The material had already been developed by the police, and the hon. member cannot assure me that prosecutions would not have gone forward in any event. I have not examined the situation which the attorney general of Quebec had to deal with when he decided to come up with that case, but I am saying that very few prosecutions resulted from the inquiry, leaving aside penalties imposed for contempt. If the hon. member can point to additional evidence which came out at that time, evidence which was not available to the police earlier, I would be very pleased to hear from him.

Mr. Stanfield: That is the longest evasion I ever heard.

An hon. Member: A good answer.

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): An hon. member across the way said it was a good answer. It was no answer. If you talk to the police chief in Montreal, as I have done, the information one gets is that the inquiry is assisting the police in their work. The Solicitor General (Mr. Fox) talks about one case, the one he mentioned which involved dead meat carcasses being ground into hamburger, and so on. I would think that this, in itself, was enough to justify the

[Mr. Fox.]

inquiry even if nothing else came out of it; and, in fact, a great deal came out of it.

I want to tell hon. members opposite where we stand as a party. We support this motion wholeheartedly. We have always believed there should be such an inquiry. I intend to put on record the number of times we have asked for an inquiry by the federal government, particularly in light of the answer of the Solicitor General yesterday. First, by what authority has the government the right to set up a royal commission into organized crime? Let us turn to section 91(21) of the British North America Act, which provides that the criminal law, except the constitution of the courts of criminal jurisdiction but including criminal matters, falls directly within the power of parliament. It is true that according to section 92, the administration of justice in the provinces, including the constitution, maintenance and organization of provincial courts, both civil and criminal, falls under provincial jurisdiction. But basically, legislation within the criminal law falls under the jurisdiction of the federal government. This is particularly the case, as the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence) pointed out yesterday, when questions of immigration, narcotics and other subjects dealt with by federal statute are concerned.

The necessary authority is already in the hands of the government, and I submit the time has come to set up a royal commission to deal with organized crime. The only excuse the government gives for not doing so is that Bill C-51 would solve the whole problem. Let us deal with the question of wiretapping. I proposed to quote from the annual report of His Excellency the Governor General of Canada presented as required by the Criminal Code, section 178(22). Ministers are always trying to deny these figures, but this is what it says on page 6:

The number of persons arrested whose identity became known to a peace officer as a result of an interception under an authorization was 1,062.

In the following paragraph we read:

The number of criminal proceedings commenced at the instance of the Attorney General of Canada in which private communications were obtained by interception under an authorization were adduced in evidence, and the number of such proceedings that resulted in a conviction was 13.

That is, the number of authorizations used amounted to 1,062, and the number of convictions totalled 13. Those are the facts. The government cannot deny them, no matter how they try. That is from a report of the Governor General. Yesterday, as reported at page 6642 of *Hansard*, the Solicitor General had this to say in answer to the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Clark):

The hon. member also asked a more general question in connection with organized crime. Listening to the opposition during the course of the question period this afternoon, one gets the impression they discovered organized crime on Monday and Tuesday nights by watching television.

What is the real situation in that regard? I want to put on record the number of times members of this party, including the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker), myself and others, have asked for a royal commission to look into organized crime.