

Security

that he had doubts about where those gadgets came from. I understand him very well, Mr. Speaker, but what strikes me most in this whole story is the obvious lack of respect and confidence that opposition members have shown for the RCMP. And it was reflected not only—

An hon. Member: Shame!

Mr. Pinard: —it was reflected not only in the situation I have just described but also in the remarks they have made for the past two and a half weeks during which they used all the procedures and tactics conceivable in this House to criticize and systematically discredit the RCMP regarding some isolated incidents into which a royal commission, an institution that was set up in a democratic way, will inquire and report.

Mr. Speaker, I blame the opposition for overlooking our institutions. This royal commission is set up in a legal and democratic manner. It has a mandate and I wonder why the opposition has been ignoring it for the past two weeks and a half. Apparently they want to take its place, make a judgment and consider facts one after the other in an attempt to discredit the RCMP and put the blame on the Solicitor General of Canada.

Some hon. Members: It takes cry babies! Unbelievable!

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, when the right hon. Prime Minister says that opposition members specifically are behaving as cry babies, he is right. These people would have been better advised to use these two weeks and a half of the time of the House of Commons to discuss the real problems of our society. Our economy needs some practical advice and a constructive opposition in the House. Our country's economy needs the co-operation of members on all sides of the House.

An hon. Member: That is too much to expect from the opposition.

Mr. Pinard: National unity is at stake and they manage to criticize those who try to help us maintain a peaceful and healthy social climate. If there were any illegal acts, if there were any isolated cases among the thousands which the RCMP are investigating, the federal government is not ignoring them. As soon as it became aware of them it has referred those cases to an existing royal commission one after the other. We can only wait for the McDonald commission to do its work and report to us later on. The federal government has always insisted that the rule of law should be respected. It will not oppose, if necessary, the proceedings which might be instituted against those who may have been at fault. In the meantime, however, I am all for applying the most equitable principle known in our society and to grant the benefit of the doubt; a person must be presumed innocent as long as he has not been found guilty in a court of law. I suggest it is the duty of this commission to examine the evidence and decide whether a number of RCMP members should be prosecuted.

Mr. La Salle: How about a number of ministers!

[Mr. Pinard.]

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle) is again voicing his customary innuendoes. He will have the opportunity to speak again tonight—I assume and hope so—and to cast aspersions upon the RCMP just as his colleagues have been doing for the past fifteen days and a half. Tonight, I want to say this: What the opposition should have done today, what opposition parties should have done today is not to move a non-confidence motion against a government which has assumed its responsibilities and respects its police force as well as the Canadian public; what the opposition should have done is move a motion of full confidence in, support and admiration for the man who, in all this, has been receiving the full support and esteem of all his colleagues on this side of the House as well as the larger majority of the Canadian public, I mean the most esteemed Solicitor General of Canada (Mr. Fox).

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (2022)

[English]

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, in taking part in the debate tonight I would say that of any debate I have been engaged in in this House, this is the most important debate to parliament and the Canadian people.

In my few words of introduction I would like to return to the motion which reads:

That this House has no confidence in the competence or desire of this government to follow the principle of ministerial responsibility, particularly as it applies to the direction of and methods used by the government security forces, and deeply regrets its unwillingness to allow a committee of this House to study the role of Ministers in security operations.

These two points are what this debate concerns. We say that the country and parliament has lost confidence in this government because of its failure to discharge ministerial responsibility, and secondly, its failure to allow parliament, by committee, to examine what has been going on in reference to the security of this nation.

It seems to be the parliamentary secretary has exaggerated in the sense that he said, "We have been engaged for two and a half weeks in this matter." During the question period we have been asking questions and receiving no answers.

The point I want to make at the beginning is this: I believe the parliamentary secretary should appreciate that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) is the chief minister in Canada, and it is his responsibility to look after security matters. That responsibility cannot be passed on to any planning security branch, nor can that responsibility be passed on to any police force. That responsibility is on the shoulders of the Prime Minister and on the shoulders of the Solicitor General (Mr. Fox) and of the Attorney General (Mr. Basford).

I want to turn to two charges that were made by the Minister of Justice. The Minister of Justice, speaking in Vancouver, as reported by the Canadian Press and repeated again this afternoon in the House, attacked opposition demands for greater ministerial accountability for the activities of the force. "Day to day political control of the police by