

ing officer of "C" Division in Montreal had been told of the search and seizure of documents on the premises occupied by the APLQ prior to the operation being carried out.

I had been briefed several times about certain activities of the APLQ and its alleged links with well known terrorists and convicted criminals. But nothing could have justified illegal acts being carried out by the RCMP or by any Canadian citizen for that matter. Had I had prior knowledge of the operation, I would have intervened to prevent it from happening. The rule of the law is paramount and the police cannot be above the law. No doubt had the former Commissioner or the former Director of Security Services been aware of the plan to illegally break in at the APLQ, they also would have forbidden it. Not once, in my 23 months as Solicitor General, did any RCMP official suggest to me that the RCMP engage in illegal activities in the pursuit of its duties.

About the APLQ letter dated October 9, 1972 and addressed to me; first of all, the letter did not intend to inform me of RCMP involvement in the break-in but rather implied and I quote:

[Translation]

... if their respective organizations were responsible for that action ...

Of course they had in mind the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Sûreté du Québec and the Montreal police.

I continue to quote:

... As Solicitor General, we ask you to act as soon as possible to give a clear and precise answer to our question.

[English]

The letter, received October 11, 1972 was not immediately brought to my attention but was referred to the RCMP. This was standard practice. All letters pertaining to the RCMP were immediately referred to them to enable them to proceed forthwith with an investigation themselves and, if the matter was of provincial jurisdiction, to ensure that the provincial authorities were also notified and would investigate. Of course, this method of dealing with complaints about the RCMP was not ideal, but those were the tools available to me at the time. That is why, in the early fall of 1972, I had recommended to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) that a commission be instituted to look into disciplinary questions and the manner in which to deal with complaints about RCMP behaviour. The recommendation was not immediately acted upon, but the Prime Minister did establish the commission when my successor was appointed.

● (1510)

On October 26, 1972, the RCMP wrote to my assistant, Colonel Cameron, recommending that no acknowledgment of the letter be sent, without providing the reason for their recommendation. My agenda indicates that I would have raised the matter with the Commissioner and the Director of Security Services of the RCMP on November 6, 1972. Was I then informed of RCMP involvement in the break-in? My answer is unequivocal and categorical: no I was not. I was advised not to acknowledge the letter because the theft of

documents referred to in the APLQ letter fell under the jurisdiction of the provincial authorities and I was informed that the Montreal police were investigating the incident.

Neither the Commissioner nor the Director of Security Services of the RCMP remember actually telling me about RCMP involvement in the incident. They do say they would be surprised if they had not done so verbally but both state very clearly that they do not remember doing so. Given that the APLQ incident was an unusual and very serious incident, it is likely that if RCMP involvement had been discussed at least one of them would recall the discussion. It is not as if we discussed such issues every day. Moreover, the RCMP's standard way of dealing with important information was to convey it to me in writing. If I may rapidly outline the procedure, important questions were referred to me in written documents, either directly or via the Deputy Solicitor General or the then Director, Security Planning and Research Group, now the Assistant Deputy Solicitor General (Police and Security), on a regular basis, oftentimes as many as five or six such documents per day. Decisions and policy directives were recorded in writing and such documents were initialed by me.

In other words, the RCMP is very efficient and meticulous in keeping its records of discussions and decisions. The Solicitor General Department's files and those of the RCMP contain no written report to me on the APLQ break-in. Although the RCMP officials claim they would be surprised if they had not told me about RCMP involvement, they specifically state they do not remember doing so and they state that such matters would normally have been dealt with in writing.

As to my asking whether or not the RCMP had actually been involved in the break-in, again the answer is no and I will explain the circumstances. Firstly, given the RCMP's distinguished reputation and past record, I found it hard to believe that the RCMP could have participated in an illegal break-in. Secondly, before my discussions with the RCMP on November 6, 1972, the Quebec justice minister had already stated publicly that no police force—not the RCMP, not La Sûreté Provinciale du Québec, not la Police de Montréal—had been involved in the alleged break-in at the APLQ. I had heard about this in the press. The matter fell under provincial jurisdiction, the minister of justice of Quebec had investigated the APLQ allegations and his conclusions were unequivocal. I had no reason to doubt his conclusions. Thus, when I discussed the APLQ letter with the RCMP it had already been publicly stated by the Quebec justice minister directly responsible for investigating this matter that the RCMP was not involved. There was no apparent reason for me to ask if in fact the RCMP was involved.

It has been alleged that it would have been my duty to put the question directly to the RCMP. But remember, the question had already been answered publicly by the responsible authorities. Bearing in mind my respect for the RCMP, given the Quebec minister of justice's statement, I, as any other member, had no reason to ask the question. When the RCMP told me the whole matter was being further investigated by the Montreal Urban Police, I concluded that the matter raised in