

many of the suspicions out there that there is no real respect for this institution from the present government.

I would plead with members on the other side that you, Mr. Speaker, have a chance to recover a little credibility in this case and to say, "No, we are not afraid of any inquiry, even if it could be slightly embarrassing to a minister." Imagine the benefits of this kind of inquiry. First of all, we will find at last that ministers will check their correspondence, will check who is providing them with the information, and some civil servants' heads will roll, and should roll, if they continue to provide misinformation to ministers who continue to mislead members of parliament.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Leggatt:** We will not deal with that kind of incompetence if the government continues to roll over these kinds of motions and to think of Mr. Speaker as simply a tool of the government rather than a tool of the House. If Mr. Speaker is to maintain credibility, I submit it is absolutely vital that this motion pass. As I said, I think it places Mr. Speaker in a position of seriously considering resigning from that position if his rulings continue to be thwarted by a government majority.

Incidentally, the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham suggested counsel with regard to this inquiry and I indicated I supported that completely. I notice the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams), who is sitting in the House today, is most interested in this debate. I might say he would be remarkably objective and fair, and I understand his fees have been remarkably modest in his legal career. I hope that members of the committee will give serious consideration to calling for counsel and will not rule out some competent members of the legal profession who happen to sit in this place.

**An hon. Member:** That's a commercial.

**Mr. Woolliams:** Best advertising I've had for a week.

**Mr. Leggatt:** The other aspect of this motion is the whole question of direct involvement with the McDonald commission inquiry. As has been pointed out, we will not receive a report for a long time. In the case of the hon. member for Nickel Belt, it is also not coincidental that his point of privilege was involved with that same inquiry, an inquiry, by the way, before which a key witness, Mr. Warren Hart, has somehow not yet been asked to testify. I suggest he would be a vital witness before that inquiry. So it is not coincidental that both these important matters of privilege arise directly from what has clearly been a Canadian scandal in the operation of our police forces.

● (1612)

I would urge that government members look at their moral duty in this place. They have a moral duty in respect of this issue, and that is to stand up and be counted before parliament. It is time we all did.

*Privilege—Mr. Lawrence*

**Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with a motion that obviously was well prepared beforehand and which obviously was in the hands of the official opposition for some time, having prepared it in consultation with the Chair. I regret that on a matter of this importance the motion itself was suddenly sprung upon us, and that we were not given any opportunity to consider the terms of the motion prior to its being put before us, obviously on a prearranged basis.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. MacEachen:** I am not drawing any conclusion except that it would have been more appropriate for an orderly debate if this particular motion had been put before all members of the House, so we would have had the opportunity of considering it before the debate itself began.

However, the motion in its first part refers to the letter sent by the then solicitor general to the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence), and to the testimony of Commissioner Higgitt before the McDonald commission.

Let me refer to the debates of November 3, in which the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham put together the testimony of Commissioner Higgitt in one sentence, and this appears in *Hansard* of November 3. He put together at least the relevant one sentence of Commissioner Higgitt's evidence with that last sentence of the letter he had received from the solicitor general, and upon that juxtaposition the question of privilege was alleged, namely, that a deliberate deceit or deception had been perpetrated against the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham.

Before dealing with the motion itself, I believe it would be useful if the letter from the solicitor general to the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham were tabled in the House of Commons. With permission I would like to table it later. Before doing so, I would like to draw the attention of the House to the facts related in the main body of the letter.

**Mr. Broadbent:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the Deputy Prime Minister and President of Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) would be thoughtful enough to table it now, following his own earlier recommendation. If he is now going to debate the letter he should table it so we can all get copies. That would prove useful to members on both sides.

**Mr. MacEachen:** I will be happy to table it when I have finished reading from it, because I have only one copy and that is the copy I intend to table.

The hon. member for Northumberland-Durham made it very clear in his speech on November 3 that he had inquired about the alleged interception of one of his constituent's letters by the RCM Police, and the reply of the solicitor general contained a complete description of all the facts in that particular case.

Of course, the item of mail he had referred to, which all of us assumed had been a letter, was not a letter in an envelope at