

Oral Questions

Mr. Trudeau: I did give an answer. I will repeat it. They were acting under the mandate they had from this government—

An hon. Member: They?

Mr. Trudeau: The RCMP security service were acting under the mandate they had from this government to try to discover terrorists or investigate suspected acts of subversion. That was the mandate they had under previous governments and which they still have under mine.

We discovered, as the House discovered, only in recent days and weeks, that the security service had entered into an act which might be deemed to be illegal. At that point we turned that matter over to the Attorney General of the province. I repeat, as was indicated in the House by myself and by the Solicitor General several times, that these initiatives were taken by the security service, by the Director-General and by the officers of that service at the highest level.

ACTION BY PRIME MINISTER TO ENSURE SECURITY SERVICE OPERATED WITHIN MANDATE

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): The Prime Minister has said, he has admitted, they were operating under a general mandate from the government. Is he telling the House of Commons that he took no steps to ensure that the general mandate flowing out of the circumstances of 1970 was not being interpreted by the security services in a way which would lead to the surveillance of a legitimate political party? Did he simply sit back passively and not interest himself in the way in which that mandate was being carried out in practice?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): I told the House yesterday that we were having periodic meetings with the security service and that they were informing us as to possible sources of subversion they were discovering. They were acquainting us with facts which they thought the cabinet or the Solicitor General or the Prime Minister should know. At one point it became clear that they were interpreting their mandate as the surveillance of a political party. They did it either in discussion or in asking us whether this was all right or in suggesting that this was what they wanted to do. They did not at any point tell us they had secret lists or that they had broken in anywhere to get secret lists.

When we discovered this was the way they were then interpreting the mandate—and, I repeat, we had had a series of briefings over the years—at the first point in the briefings at which it became apparent they were doing a certain thing that we thought objectionable, we asked them to stop.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Mr. Clark.]

INQUIRY WHETHER GUIDELINES FOR SECURITY SERVICE WERE INTERPRETED

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Halifax): Yesterday, the Prime Minister told the House that following the events in Quebec in 1970 the government modified the mandate of the RCMP or the security forces. He said, and I quote, "I directed the RCMP to pay a little more attention to internal subversion caused by ideological sources in Canada." I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether, at the time those directions were given, the meaning of "internal subversion caused by ideological sources in Canada" was interpreted for the security service of the RCMP by the government, whether the directive was in writing and, if these were written directions, whether the Prime Minister would table them in the House.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): I can easily answer the first part of the question. The House will remember that in October, 1970 we had come to a crisis because of actions of the FLQ. That had arrived after a series of bombings, train derailments, looting of arsenals and so on.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Apprehended insurrection.

Mr. Trudeau: As the hon. member from Prince Edward Island correctly says, apprehended insurrection.

● (1427)

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): That is not the way I voted.

Mr. Trudeau: If the hon. member now wants to leave his party, he can always leave his party. It has happened before, Mr. Speaker, and it might happen again.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: To get back to the question of the hon. member for Halifax, it is obvious that in that context we are telling the police, as I believe they felt themselves, that the information they had on terrorism in the name of separatism was not sufficient. We gave them in discussion directives to increase and accelerate their surveillance and the nature of their intelligence in that particular area.

The hon. member wants to know if I can table this. This is obviously a direction which was given in cabinet. Whether it was incorporated in the precise record of decision, I do not know. Certainly, we would not table cabinet discussions or decisions in parliament, but let me tell the hon. member that this is what we decided and the wording of any particular RD may be secondary.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I would hardly think it would be surprising to the Prime Minister anymore than to me if the RCM Police had some doubts as to what is meant by internal subversion caused by ideological sources. This might well lead to surveillance of a democratic party such as the Parti Québécois. Having clearly said yesterday that the government of the day is certainly responsible for the scope and mandate of the operations of the security force, how can the Prime Minister possibly maintain that he discharged his responsibility as