

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Ronald Patrick Lippert is alleged to have confessed that he was an agent for the United States central intelligence agency. I wonder whether the minister's department has made any inquiries as to the accuracy of this statement, and whether the confession was actually made and is in accordance with the facts. If so, does the minister intend to make any protest to the government of the United States for having one of its agencies involve a Canadian citizen in illegal acts against another country with which we have normal diplomatic relations?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. gentleman will understand why I would not want to comment now on these alleged facts. I make no comment on whether they are true or whether we have any indication to lead us to believe they are not true. I make no comment on this point at all. Certainly until the judicial proceedings have been completed I do not propose to say anything that might prejudice in any way the conclusion of those proceedings.

Mr. Douglas: A supplementary question. Does the minister intend, however, to carry on an investigation to see if the facts as alleged in the said confession are accurate?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I do not want to say anything at this time until the judicial proceedings have been completed.

Mr. Douglas: The minister has succeeded in not saying anything.

Mr. H. W. Herridge (Kootenay West): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Did a Mr. Garfat, a Mr. Rueben or any other businessman from Ontario visit the minister or any of his officials to discuss arrangements for the flying of these canned goods to Cuba?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether the particular canned goods in question were discussed with the minister, but I shall look at the documents and see what is the situation.

[Later:]

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Minister of Justice if an investigation is being undertaken, in view of the evidence at the trial in Cuba, into the reported canning of the explosives in the Toronto area.

Hon. Lionel Chevrier (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I am afraid this is a matter which does not fall within the responsibilities of the Department of Justice. This is an event which has taken place in another country.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

[Mr. Martin (Essex East).]

Some hon. Members: Toronto.

Mr. Chevrier: If I may be allowed to complete my answer, in the light of the question which the hon. member has put I will be glad to ask our people to look into the matter.

Mr. Douglas: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Surely the minister must have misunderstood the question. The question the hon. member asked was with reference to certain goods which it is alleged were canned in Ontario, and now it is claimed that the cans contained explosives. Surely it is the responsibility of the police authorities to see whether persons are canning explosives under the guise of canning food.

Mr. Chevrier: Mr. Speaker, I must admit at once, and I apologize to the hon. gentleman, that I misunderstood the question as it was put. However, having regard to the answer already given by the Secretary of State for External Affairs to a related question, I have nothing to add to what he has already said.

Mr. Peters: We do not want to carry the question any further, but the suggestion has been made that this canning was done in Canada, and this question has no relationship to the problem of external affairs. If this is being done I presume a criminal offence would be committed, and this could be investigated irrespective of the decision made by external affairs.

Mr. Chevrier: I shall be glad to look into the question. I am sure my hon. friend realizes that if there is an offence under the Criminal Code the constitution is quite clear that this would fall within provincial jurisdiction. So the attorney general of the province is the one who normally, under those circumstances, would have a certain responsibility. I do not want to take responsibility from the Department of Justice, if there is any, and I shall be glad, as I said earlier, to look into the matter.

[Later:]

Mr. Herridge: Mr. Speaker, I desire to direct a question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. Would the minister inform the house whether canned goods being exported from Canada are subject to inspection by inspectors of the food and drugs division of her department?

Hon. Judy V. LaMarsh (Minister of National Health and Welfare): I do not know offhand, Mr. Speaker, but I know we do not inspect them to see if they are explosives.