

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

assume that no persons have been suspended or charged? More important, in light of the information supplied by the hon. member for Central Nova (Mr. MacKay), will the minister take steps with regard to protecting the documents and letters that may be involved with regard to investigation?

Mr. Fox: Yes, Mr. Speaker. A directive has now been issued by the Commissioner of the RCMP to stop any further destruction of documents by the RCMP, even in their normal course of operation in the destruction of documents that have lost their use.

Mr. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, will the minister indicate whether my understanding of the terms of reference is correct, that the commission of inquiry is specifically directed that the proceedings of the inquiry be held in camera on all matters relating to national security? If that is so, can the minister indicate whether any investigation into the mishandling of this affair by the former solicitor general, the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Goyer), conducted by this commission will have to be held in camera in view of the fact that the illegal break-in into L'Agence de Presse Libre du Québec was justified on the grounds of national security? In other words, is it not the case that the terms of reference are so restricted that the inquiry is directed by the government that any investigation of the activities of the former solicitor general with regard to the L'Agence de Presse Libre du Québec affair will have to be held in secret behind closed doors?

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, that is not the reading I have of the terms of reference. The terms of reference are quite clear that if, in the opinion of the commission, there is a matter of national security which is at stake, it has the power and is indeed directed to sit in camera. However, if matters do not relate to national security, matters which I presume are information and national security is not involved, there would be no obligation to sit in camera.

In light of previous experience, for example in crime inquiries in Montreal where numbers of people had allegations made against them and no opportunity to defend themselves, a commission should take that into consideration and make up its mind whether there is a public interest and whether it should be held in camera or open. They should also consider whether individual rights are involved which may be adversely affected if the proceedings are not held in camera.

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, members on this side of the House will be very interested to see whether that investigation will take place in camera or in open session.

With regard to the terms of reference, may I also ask the minister whether in his opinion they are intended by the government to be broad enough to cover the exchange or correspondence tabled in the House yesterday by the Minister of Supply and services which included a letter from his assistant, Mr. Cameron, dated October 11, 1972, and marked urgent. It asked the RCMP for a recommendation as to what sort of acknowledgement, if any, should be made to the letter

of allegation from L'Agence de Presse Libre du Québec, concluding with the final sentence "It is noted that reply has been requested by 11 a.m. on Friday, 13 October, 1972, two days later.", and to determine what the reason was why it took 15 days, including 13 days beyond that deadline, for the RCMP to reply, and determine whether there was any other form of communication by the RCMP and the Solicitor General's office during that period?

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question may be very interesting from a historical point of view. The facts are as the Minister of Supply and Services has indicated. The letter was discussed at a subsequent meeting with the head of the RCMP. The matter was dealt with at that time in the manner I indicated in my statement and the minister indicated in his. What happened in between does not seem to have very much relevance.

[Translation]

Mr. Léonel Beaudoin (Richmond): Mr. Speaker, when the Solicitor General made his statement on the APLQ incident on June 17, 1977, I thought precisely that it was certainly not of an extraordinary or isolated nature. Here is my question: To pursue the matter I had raised at the time with the Solicitor General, in view of the fact that the Quebec government has appointed Mr. Keable to investigate almost the same matter, because it would be wrong to think that this inquiry will be carried on largely outside Quebec, since it will take place essentially in Quebec, I believe, can the minister tell the House whether this royal commission—and I congratulate him for setting it up because it was necessary, in my opinion—will cooperate with Mr. Keable or will they have authority to ask Mr. Keable to appear before them as regards the investigation he has been carrying on? Can he also tell us what results can be expected? If so, does he think this matter might lead us to a constitutional fight.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, I do not think this matter might lead us to a kind of constitutional fight, as the hon. member has suggested. In my opinion, our position is extremely clear. If it had been an isolated, extraordinary and very specific case, if it were a criminal offence perpetrated within this province, this inquiry would fall under the jurisdiction of the provincial attorney general, who is responsible for the administration and implementation of the Criminal Code within his province, and this is what we have done.

At the present time, other allegations lead us to believe that it was not an unusual nor an isolated event. Therefore, as the government responsible for the federal police force, it seems to me quite normal to set up a commission of inquiry to examine the behaviour of the federal police under the circumstances. However, I do not expect any clash between the two commissions of inquiry and I do not see why the federal commission should call Mr. Keable as a witness. I think that Mr. Keable has very definite terms of reference on four specific questions which have been raised, among others why the inquiry of the Montreal police force came to an end. As for us, there would be other practices, perhaps illegal, which we suspect and we