

Oral Questions

the RCMP to have break-ins. This was discussed very clearly with them in my office in the spring of last year and with the then Solicitor General, at which time I told the House we had considered an investigation into the kind of matter that the hon. leader of the NDP is talking about. We had these specific assurances. It is these assurances which have been repeated by the present Solicitor General and by myself. This assertion quoted by the leader of the NDP is obviously in contradiction of this.

Apparently there is an allegation by a former RCMP member that there have been generalized illegalities. Naturally, the Solicitor General will look into these allegations and see if there is any truth to them. If so, we will have to take further action. I am still going on the assumption that the RCMP acts constantly within the framework of the law and that the incident in Montreal was an aberration, an exception, which is not excused or condoned, but it was isolated.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, the recently found faith of the Prime Minister in the RCMP—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Broadbent: —is a little disturbing in view of the information that we now have. The Prime Minister, the present Solicitor General and the former Solicitor General in statements made within the past three days of sittings of this House have all intimated at various times serious degrees of feeling of unease with regard to the accountability question. Considering that it was the RCMP at the top level in Ottawa some four years ago which refused to tell a series of Solicitors General of their own illegal activity, why is the Prime Minister now prepared to accept from the same sources their testimony only that no systematic wrongdoing has been undertaken in the past or is continuing now?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I am not accepting their testimony only. Hon. members opposite have made various allegations. The government, through the Solicitor General, has inquired into them. If the hon. member has other allegations to make, let us hear them from him. He has just quoted a statement made by a former RCMP officer to the press. Naturally we will inquire into that. I am not just taking the RCMP Commissioner's word for it. We are looking into every possible accusation put forth from any source on either side of the House or across the country.

Naturally, we want to make sure that the RCMP act within the law and that when they do not they are properly punished. But we can do no more than accept the word of these people who have dedicated themselves to the public service in the police force of Canada until it is flatly belied by some specific charge. Such charges can be inquired into. The Solicitor General has welcomed information from across the aisle and he will look into any allegations which are made.

[Mr. Trudeau.]

ACCOUNTABILITY OF FORCE TO POLITICAL AUTHORITY—
GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): The Prime Minister knows that the method of investigating such allegations in the past has been to require the RCMP to look into the charges made against him. What reason do we have for believing that the investigation will be any more systematic or fair-minded than that? The Prime Minister and other ministers have referred in the last few days to the inquiry which is going on in the province of Quebec, conducted by the government of that province, and the terms of reference of that inquiry do not include the possibility of looking into the question of the accountability of the RCMP to the political authorities in Ottawa. Is the Prime Minister satisfied that this important matter has been adequately dealt with in the last few days and that there is absolutely no need for an inquiry into this aspect?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): I cannot say that the question of accountability has been completely settled to the satisfaction of the government. We indicated in the House the other day that certain measures had been taken and that others would be taken in the fall pursuant to Judge Marin's inquiry and recommendations. I am open to suggestions on that matter. I certainly would not expect a commissioner appointed by the government of Quebec, even if it were within his terms of reference, to make recommendations to us as to how we should interface with the RCMP.

Mr. Broadbent: That is exactly why I am suggesting an inquiry.

Mr. Trudeau: Precisely, Mr. Speaker. I do not think an inquiry such as is proposed by the hon. member would be any more enlightening than if members of the House and of the government, in a constructive mood, seek to find ways of increasing accountability. I think this is a political question. I do not see the great advantage—

Mr. Fraser: It is a judicial question.

Mr. Trudeau: The question of accountability is not a judicial question.

Mr. Fraser: The question of how you determine the truth is a judicial question.

Mr. Trudeau: So I understand. The hon. member for Vancouver South wants to follow some other alley. He is, of course, entitled to rise in his place and ask a question—if he can articulate one.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: But if he wants to remain on the subject he must realize that the present question and answer have to do with political accountability of the force to the minister, and not the question of the truth. That is another subject with