

Speaker, saying that to ask questions would invite accusations of having undue political influence. That is sheer garbage, a complete desertion of ministerial responsibility. Certainly they have to ask questions. I presume that every week in his briefing sessions the Solicitor General is asking questions. If he is not, he should be asked why. And what about his predecessors, why were they not asking questions?

All the red herrings and all the figure skating we have seen over the last two weeks are consistent with only one thing—they are consistent with a government and its ministers who have rejected their responsibilities. They are consistent with nothing else.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jarvis: Some of the responsibilities are difficult, Mr. Speaker. It is trite to say what a difference there is between political dissent and subversion. That is a difficult problem and no one on this side, or in any party in this House, is denying that. But surely that difficulty is no excuse or reason for a minister or ministers to be careful to remain ignorant of facts. It cannot be thus in our system in terms of ministerial competence or ministerial responsibility.

The Solicitor General unhappily insists on the easy way out—change the law, not break it. That is a trite answer. He asks Canadians not to be too harsh in judging some of the people involved. People are not harsh in judging the people involved, Mr. Speaker—the people are harsh in judging, as is their right through their elected representatives, the competence and responsibility of ministers.

The minister stood in his place today and said that he wanted people not to be too harsh in judging people. That is garbage. It is our job to judge them. That is the reason for the existence of this House—to judge them.

The Solicitor General said that people are demanding that heads roll. He also objects to the term “government security forces.” Good heavens, if we cannot use that term without the Solicitor General objecting, what term shall we use? The Solicitor General says we create the impression that it is a state police. Nonsense!

Finally, the Solicitor General says that everything goes to the royal commission. When he runs out of answers everything is a matter for the royal commission. The McDonald commission has been overtaken by events in the context of times through no fault of its own—an avalanche of events, as one editorial put it.

That commission was established on the basis of one alleged illegal event—the hon. parliamentary secretary shakes his head—with assurances in this House that there would not be any more. The hon. member would do well to check the record and I hope he will rise to correct me at the end of my remarks if I am wrong. I would welcome his interjection.

We were not talking about revelation after revelation, daily, every time we turned on the television or read a newspaper. I have no satisfaction, no member of this party and I am sure not even the parliamentary secretary know any satisfaction in

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that at all. My point is that taken in the context of its time, the time of the appointment of the McDonald Commission, events have overtaken it and left it far behind. I am not saying the commission should be disbanded. Not at all. Let it continue, but let us be clear: the sequence of events that have overtaken the McDonald commission now involve the rule of law, the limits on national security activity, the political supervision of the police function, and the quality of ministerial judgment. The McDonald commission is not and cannot be charged with the political half of this problem. There is no indication that the terms of reference are broad enough. Forgetting that, what inclination would the commission have to assume that responsibility? None at all, Mr. Speaker. Events have overtaken that commission.

For the sake of the integrity of the RCMP, if for no other reason, do not wait for the ponderous deliberations of the royal commission. The commission is not charged with the responsibility of restoring public confidence. What exists today, November 15, in Canada is an attack on the integrity not only of the administration of law enforcement agencies, which is serious enough, but on the political system itself.

It is this House of Commons and no other forum that should and must meet the attack. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I urge the government to reconsider its rejection of an all-party committee of this House of Commons because it is our view, and surely must be the view of Canadians everywhere, that it is only this House and its members through this committee that can take the first step to meet that attack.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, what I have found thoroughly depressing about the last week or two is not the activities of the RCMP although I must say I think in some cases the police have deserved criticism, but it has been the complete insensitivity of the Government of Canada to its responsibilities and to the whole basic human right which depends upon the maintenance of law and order.

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We have seen contempt for the principle of law and order on the part of representatives of the government, and I propose to try to document that statement to some extent. This is what I think has been the most distressing feature of this whole situation, and it is so unnecessary. If you want my opinion, Mr. Speaker, I think it is plain stupid.

I think that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) in her little discussions at Carleton University spoke more sense than all the ministers of the government who have spoken on this matter when she said there was no emergency, that the proper thing to do—and I underline this—was for government representatives to say, “Something has happened which is serious, which is wrong, and we intend to investigate. We intend where necessary to prosecute. We intend to appoint a commission to see whether there are further ramifications”.