

*Company of Young Canadians*MOTION OF REFERENCE TO STANDING
COMMITTEE

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (President of the Privy Council) moved:

That the Standing Committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts be empowered to consider and make a final report to the House, not later than December 5th, 1969, upon the legislative framework, organization, and operations of the Company of Young Canadians, and that, for the purpose of its inquiry, the committee be empowered to retain the services of counsel and to adjourn from place to place within Canada, and that the clerk, counsel, and the necessary supporting staff be authorized to accompany the committee.

• (11:10 a.m.)

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, normally we would have no objection and, as a matter of fact, would welcome terms of reference to a committee of the House to look into the legislative framework, the organization and operations of the Company of Young Canadians. For some time we have felt there is a need for an evaluation of the work of this organization and an examination of the Act, which is lacking in clarification on a number of points, as well as the need for a restructuring of the organization itself. Consequently we cannot object to the motion on those grounds.

However, I do wish to express my misgivings because the motion naturally is closely associated in the public mind with the statement made by the Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier) last Wednesday when he spoke of the fact that unsubstantiated charges of subversion had been made against the Company of Young Canadians. The public naturally will assume that the main task this committee will have before it will be to deal with the charges that have been made. The fact that in the motion before the House the committee is to be empowered to retain the services of counsel only strengthens my misgivings in that regard. If the committee is to look into the structure and legal framework of this organization and evaluate its work, then of course we will be very pleased to support it. But I do think we should express our fears that in the light of the statement of the Secretary of State and in the light of the fact that the committee is to be empowered to retain counsel there is every probability that the inquiry could escalate into a witch hunt.

If Mr. Saulnier, one of the persons who made these charges of subversion, is called and names names, those names will appear in the public press, and the person so named

[Mr. Speaker.]

will have the right to appear before the committee. If Mr. Anthony Malcolm, the vice-president of the Quebec section of the Liberal Federation of Canada, is called to substantiate his charges that there are some 27 persons guilty of subversion, 18 of whom were or are members of the Company of Young Canadians, and certainly if he makes these charges before the committee, then the persons so named will be entitled to appear before the committee, and the House of Commons could find itself conducting a kangaroo court.

I am sure every member of the House is concerned about the question of subversion. There are two ways to deal with subversion. One is that if there is sufficient evidence that a person has been guilty of an illegal act he should be charged in the courts. If the person has not been guilty of an illegal act but has conducted himself in a manner unbecoming to an organization supported by public funds, he should be disciplined. If there is no provision under the Act for the executive director to discipline him, the government should ask the House to amend the Act to give the executive director adequate power. But I think a word of caution is necessary. We must remind ourselves that the House of Commons is neither a court of law nor an administrative tribunal. So far as our members on that committee are concerned they will do everything possible to try to see that a House of Commons committee is not used to do things which could more properly be done elsewhere.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald) that the motion just introduced is in English only, not in French. Since it is generally agreed that all federal services should be bilingual, I think that the President of the Privy Council should have had his motion translated so we could read it in French.

As for the motion itself, I believe that most Canadians will be glad to see how promptly the government is prepared to appoint the committee due to report by December 5th on the activities and operations of the Company of Young Canadians.

Everyone knows about the charges that have been made, especially by Mr. Saulnier of Montreal and I think it is time the nation and, above all, that the Canadian Parliament be made aware of those dealings if they are indeed objectionable. We should be told of the charges laid down so that we may see if