

Oral Questions

Parti Québécois and others—was beyond the knowledge of the responsible minister and the Prime Minister. That is the question I asked, and I would like a simple answer.

An hon. Member: Yes or no to that.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, I can answer from my own experience as Solicitor General for the past year that I have had weekly meetings with the head of the security service.

Mr. Clark: That is not the question.

Mr. Fox: I am kept fully apprised of the scope of the surveillance which is done by the RCMP in our country at the moment.

KNOWLEDGE OF PRIME MINISTER OF SCOPE OF SURVEILLANCE OF PARTI QUÉBÉCOIS

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I can get an answer from the Acting Prime Minister to that very simple question. When the Prime Minister speaks as he has about surveillance of the Parti Québécois by security operations in this country, is it the position of the Prime Minister that the scope of these operations was beyond the ken or knowledge of himself and the responsible minister, despite the emphasis we placed on the importance of this when the McKenzie report was tabled in the House back in 1969?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I cannot answer on behalf of the Prime Minister on this specific case. According to what I know in the case, as soon as the Prime Minister knew that there was an investigation going on about the Parti Québécois he immediately ordered that that investigation stop, and the moment the Solicitor General learned that there had been some illegal activity he immediately referred the case to the attorney general of the province of Quebec.

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[English]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

ACCEPTABILITY OF CONDUCT OF SECURITY SERVICE TO SOLICITOR GENERAL

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Solicitor General. I want to have some clarification as a result of the statement he made last Friday. Perhaps you will excuse me, Mr. Speaker, if I give a preamble.

The minister asked the people of Canada not to be overly hasty in their judgment of this case. Those are strange words coming from the Solicitor General. He said the following:

The action was taken on the authority of officers whose motives were of the highest order and beyond any doubt. It was authorized and carried out in the absolute conviction that its sole object was to promote the security of Canada given the political and social climate prevailing in 1973.

[Mr. Stanfield.]

Was the Solicitor General suggesting to the people of Canada that the conduct engaged in in 1973 was and is acceptable to the Government of Canada, particularly the Solicitor General? That is what I want to ask. Has the minister an answer?

Hon. Francis Fox (Solicitor General): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would be delighted to repeat the answer I have already given to the House at least ten times in the past two days, and that is that any illegal operation is of course unacceptable to the government of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

INQUIRY INTO ALLEGED POLICE ILLEGALITIES—POSSIBILITY MINISTER WILL NOT INVOKE EXECUTIVE PRIVILEGE

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Solicitor General as well, and I for one am delighted by his obsession and commitment to arriving at the truth in the most expedient and efficient manner; the truth, incidentally, to which only he seems to be a stranger.

Having regard to the fact that the minister relies totally on the royal commission to bring out the truth about all these matters and because of the fact that there will be the revelation of at least ministerial indiscretions if not criminal involvement by ministers, I would like to ask the Solicitor General if he is now prepared to commit himself to forgoing his executive privilege which is inherent in section 41(2) of the Federal Court Act under which he can withhold evidence and documentation from this commission. Is he prepared to forgo this executive privilege in this case?

Hon. Francis Fox (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, in theory I cannot answer the question, but it is my intention to make all documents and all files in the possession of the RCMP available to the royal commission of inquiry. There may be some cases where I will ask the royal commission of inquiry not to make the contents of those files public if the matter of national security is involved. However, I will make all the files which are in my possession available to the royal commission of inquiry.

Mr. Oberle: The minister has told us that he is not prepared to forgo his executive privilege, and there may be documents which will be withheld by him.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Oberle: If the minister is extending this qualified co-operation to the federal royal commission which he himself appointed, will he also not forgo his executive privileges with respect to the commissions which are operating at the present time in the provinces of Ontario, Quebec and Alberta?