

RCMP

Attention has focused recently, unfortunately, on the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Naturally, if the RCMP breaks the law, it must bear the consequences. However, many of the activities that have come to light have not been performed by rank and file members of the RCMP, but rather by the special security service.

It is important to dwell a moment on the relationship of the security service to the RCMP. Theoretically, it exists under the Commissioner of the RCMP. In practice, it is directed by a director general who, whatever his relation to the Commissioner, also reports directly to the Solicitor General, and, on occasion, to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). There is a very real question as to whether the activities of the security service are activities which the Commissioner of the RCMP is authorized to control.

That raises the basic question: who sets the policy of the security apparatus in Canada? Who polices that apparatus?

We know who should set the policy and police the activities. In our system, cabinet should set the policy, control the security service, and bear the responsibility for any excesses by the security service.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (2012)

Mr. Clark: It appears that the cabinet is not carrying out that responsibility. I say "appears", Mr. Speaker, because there are at least two interpretations of those facts which have become public since the spring of this year. One interpretation is that ministers are not meeting their responsibility to oversee and control the security service. The other interpretation is that the cabinet is setting policy, whether through Colonel Bourne or General Dare or the cabinet committee on security and intelligence chaired by the Prime Minister, but will not accept responsibility when things go wrong.

There is a lot of evidence that we have to consider when looking at the question of who is in charge, in fact, of security policy in this country. We have to bear in mind that a former solicitor general, the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Goyer), as debate in this House earlier this year indicated, deliberately chose not to ask questions it was his duty to ask.

We have to consider the behaviour of the next solicitor general, the current Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Allmand). He was solicitor general for almost four years from 1972 to 1976, the period in which virtually all of these activities took place. On the weekend, as reported by the news media, this minister said that he did not think that he has been told about the theft of the PQ computer list, but he was not sure.

Mr. Allmand: I did not.

Mr. Clark: He now says the news reports were wrong. This afternoon, through the mouth of the current Solicitor General, we are told that the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs is now absolutely certain that he knew nothing about any illegal activity. If we are to believe the government's story,

[Mr. Clark.]

the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs was told in March, 1976, while he was still Solicitor General, of the 1972 illegal break-in at the APLQ office. Yet there is no evidence whatsoever that even with this specific information before him he made any real effort to find out what other incidents of that kind might have occurred while he was the minister responsible to this parliament.

We have heard the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs heckling across the aisle tonight. I would hope that he would enter into the debate tonight—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark:—and that he will tell the House of Commons of Canada in detail precisely how he exercised his responsibility in each of the cases which have already been made public here.

Mr. Allmand: This has already been told.

Mr. Clark: I want to turn now, Mr. Speaker, to the present Solicitor General who has held that position since September, 1976. He must have known shortly after he took office about the details of the APLQ break-in. Even the government admits that it knew those details in March, 1976. Yet it was not until January of this year, nine months after he became Solicitor General, that the present minister bothered to tell parliament and the people of Canada anything about that affair.

On June 17, you will remember, Sir, he told this House that the APLQ break-in was, and I quote his words, "exceptional and isolated". He was at some pains to assure us that he had no evidence whatsoever to suggest that other illegal acts had been committed by federal security services. Now, barely five months later, he has come back before parliament to admit more such incidents—we do not know how many more.

According to the minister, he found out about these latest incidents a week ago. This time it took him a full week to get around to notifying parliament and the people of Canada, and then he chose the last day of the throne speech debate, on the last day of the week, so that he could be free of immediate questioning.

I think it is also important, Mr. Speaker, for us to point out on the record that the Solicitor General of Canada made these announcements last week because he knew that if he did not "come clean" before the House of Commons, the evidence of break-ins would become known to the Parliament of Canada through provincial inquiries or other means. In other words, he did not tell parliament because he wanted to; he told parliament because he was forced to.

I was interested in the question period this afternoon to note that the Solicitor General, in answer to a question of mine, ascribed to the director general of the security services the authority for discussing, and I believe he said approving, the break-in at the Parti Québécois offices relating to—

Mr. Fox: You called it a break-in; I did not.

Mr. Gillies: What do you call it then, a cover-up?

Mr. Alexander: Now relax, take it easy.