

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

[English]

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE**MCDONALD INQUIRY—ALLEGED DISCREPANCY BETWEEN EVIDENCE ADDUCED AND STATEMENT OF EX-SOLICITOR GENERAL**

Mr. Bill Jarvis (Perth-Wilmot): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General. I wonder if the minister can explain the obvious discrepancy between the evidence adduced before the McDonald commission through the witness, former commissioner Higgitt, which would indicate that one of the Solicitor General's predecessors, now Minister of Supply and Services, was aware of the APLQ break-in in 1972, and the statement of that minister which indicated that he was not aware of the incident until 1976. Will the Solicitor General explain that discrepancy?

● (1622)

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, I call the attention of the hon. gentleman to a statement made in this House by my predecessor, the present Minister of Supply and Services, who gave a very explicit explanation in which he denied any knowledge. The hon. member for Argenteuil-Deux-Montagnes alluded to that statement in his own statement in this House, and indicated the circumstances as well. In making his statement, the present Minister of Supply and Services indicated that he was making it as though under oath. I accept the statement he made with reference to the evidence which has been given to the inquiry by former commissioner Higgitt. I suggest we wait and see what other evidence may be adduced before that commission, before making any comment. I hope the hon. member will be patient enough to wait until all the evidence is in, so that proper conclusions can be made.

Mr. Jarvis: Mr. Speaker, the Solicitor General is asking for a considerable amount of patience. Did the previous solicitor general, the present Minister of Supply and Services, authorize any telephone surveillance of the APLQ and, if so, can the Solicitor General explain why his predecessor did not fully inform himself at that time of the complete scope of security operations which were being directed against the APLQ?

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, again I refer the hon. gentleman to the statement, which was made on a question of privilege, of the Minister of Supply and Services with reference to the other aspect of the question, I wish to reserve. Perhaps the hon. gentleman will choose to ask that question again at some future time.

Mr. Jarvis: The Solicitor General is well aware, as are all hon. members, that we cannot ask former ministers questions, and we cannot be represented before the McDonald commission because counsel for the minister's predecessor argued against that—unfortunately, successfully. However, is it the policy of the present Solicitor General to continue the policy of his predecessor, whereby before the standing committee studying estimates officials of the department were not allowed to

[Mr. Speaker.]

answer questions put to them by members of the committee with regard to the dates upon which certain officials and ministers were informed of certain events? Is that a continuing policy of the present Solicitor General?

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, I will have to look at the record, consider what the hon. gentleman is advancing and perhaps provide him with additional comment at some future time.

MCDONALD INQUIRY—ACTION TAKEN RESULTING IN ARREST OF RED ARMY TERRORIST

Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham): Mr. Speaker, by way of a supplementary question I would like to test the Prime Minister with regard to the bona fides of asking and answering questions in the House. At a press conference on November 18, the Prime Minister said that the mail opening activity of the security service resulted in the arrest of a Red Army terrorist. In view of contradictory testimony to the royal commission last week, which indicated that a wire-tap, not a mail opening, resulted in the arrest of this Red Army terrorist, can the Prime Minister now revise his statement to coincide with the testimony provided by Staff Sergeant James Pollock?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am informed that that testimony covers some 30 pages: I believe the Solicitor General indicated that in his answer on Friday. I have not read the 30 pages, and I was not present at the royal commission, but I am informed that the purport and intent of the testimony was that the mail opening was very fundamental and necessary.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Trudeau: Hon. members opposite have probably read the press reports, but I enjoin them, as the Solicitor General enjoined them on Friday, to read the 30 pages and reach their own conclusions. I have not read them. I have been informed that the testimony of the witness was to the effect that if the police had known at the time that they could get information of future value from other sources, they perhaps would not have opened mail. However, when you are conducting an investigation, you do not know what further evidence you might get in the future.

Mr. Woolliams: There was no evidence as a result of opening mail.

Mr. Trudeau: I am told that that is the conclusion of the witness but, unfortunately, that is not the impression which was created in the reporting of that testimony. I will gladly continue to attempt to elucidate on such questions and so will the Solicitor General, but if we are called upon, on a day to day basis, to comment on the credibility of witnesses, I think it will be obvious to the Chair that we will be engaging in an operation which will be completely unproductive.

Mr. Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I am told that in the small portion of Staff Sergeant James Pollock's testimony with