

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

[English]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE**PROPOSED EXPANSION OF TERMS OF REFERENCE OF
COMMISSION OF INQUIRY TO INCLUDE MINISTERIAL
RESPONSIBILITY**

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I had intended to direct a question to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, but two minutes ago we received notice that he will make a statement on motions. Therefore, I will direct my question to the Solicitor General. The terms of reference of the judicial commission of inquiry into the RCMP are narrow, restrictive and inadequate. Therefore, I should like to ask the Solicitor General if he would undertake to expand the mandate of the MacDonald Commission to formally require a complete investigation of ministerial actions and ministerial responsibilities with respect to the interface between the national government and our national police force?

[Translation]

Hon. Francis Fox (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Of course, more will be needed than merely stating the terms of reference. In fact, the mandate entrusted by this government to the commission of inquiry is extremely broad. One need but read it, and perhaps in some cases reread it, to see that the commission of inquiry is really authorized to look into all allegations of illegal and criminal activities, and pursue them from one link to the other all the way down the line, provided of course there is a line. I have absolutely no intention, at this stage, Mr. Speaker, of broadening a mandate that is quite wide enough to allow the commission to receive, study and understand all the allegations which may be made, far-fetched, founded as they may be, against the RCMP.

[English]

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, the minister well knows that the only people who think those terms of reference are large enough to adequately look into the question of ministerial responsibility are himself, his partisans and other people who might have something to protect. What is surprising to us is that the Prime Minister of this government, in the House on May 24—

An hon. Member: He is the Prime Minister of this country.

Mr. Clark: I did not know that the government wanted to renounce him so quickly, but even if they do not the country will as soon as an opportunity arises. Since the Prime Minister on May 24 stated in the House that in respect of activities of the RCMP "the principle of ministerial responsibility applies", and since the Solicitor General has also himself stated that under the Official Secrets Act he is required to "approve in a certain number of cases the operations of the RCMP security service", I should like to ask the Solicitor General why the government will admit ministerial responsibility in theory yet

[Mr. Speaker.]

deny a specific mandate to inquire as to how it was exercised in this particular case.

[Translation]

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is referring to the Official Secrets Act. Some powers are given to me by that act. It goes without saying, Mr. Speaker, that the Official Secrets Act speaks for itself. I have no comments to make on that. The powers are explicit. Everyone is aware of them. With regard to ministerial responsibility, Mr. Speaker, I feel it is completely obvious, simply in the light of my statement yesterday as well as previous statements in the House, that on this side of the House, not only do we accept but we have been, for some time now, living up to the principle of ministerial responsibility.

[English]

**NUMBER OF ILLEGAL ACTIONS IN WHICH FORCE INVOLVED,
PERIOD OF TIME COVERED AND MINISTERIAL KNOWLEDGE OF
THEM**

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): What is clear, Mr. Speaker, is that if these ministers can find any way at all to evade responsibility and to blame their public servants, they will do it. In his statement to the House yesterday the Solicitor General stated that he had been informed by the commissioner of the RCMP that some members of the RCMP, to quote the minister, "in the dispatch of their responsibility to protect national security could well have used methods or could have been involved in actions which were neither authorized nor provided for by law". With respect to this important admission by the commissioner, I should like to ask the Solicitor General how many illegal actions the RCMP have been involved in, over what period of time have they occurred, and to what degree did any minister have any knowledge of any aspect of investigations which involved illegal activities.

[Translation]

Hon. Francis Fox (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, I have indeed much difficulty understanding the question the Leader of the Opposition is asking. Nearly every day over the past month or month and a half, the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues have moved motion after motion under Standing Order 43, seeking an impartial inquiry. As a matter of fact, when I made my statement in the House on June 17 last, I was told that the word of the Solicitor General of Canada was not enough, that an impartial inquiry was needed. Opposition members wanted an impartial and independent inquiry, well, they have it now, and it should provide all the answers the Leader of the Opposition has been seeking.

[English]

Mr. Clark: A final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. The minister protests with all the vigour we have become accustomed to in place of answers to questions. What I asked him related to the information he received from the commissioner, and in particular I wanted to know whether any minister had any knowledge of any aspect of any investigation which involved illegal actions, and whether that is now known