

Supply—Solicitor General

It is very strange, Mr. Chairman, that if Maunder's version is not correct, this was not raised at the trial or in cross-examination or in some reply to his letter to the Prime Minister. I remind the committee that he swore this in court, that he was under cross-examination, and that he had written to the Prime Minister, setting out this story, and there was absolutely no denial or contradiction of his statements. Without the production of the records of the R.C.M.P. it may be difficult to assess whether his statement is fully correct. I know it is correct in some particulars.

I bring this matter forward because it seems to me that it is a shocking case of lack of sensitivity to the rights of individuals. It is not the duty of the prosecution to hide extenuating factors. Indeed, as I understand it, it is their duty to put them forward. It is not enough to say, as counsel for the crown said at the hearing, that the dealings of Mr. Maunder with the R.C.M.P. were with the branch that deals with security and that the prosecutions were the responsibility of another branch dealing with export and import matters. The excuse that the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing is, under these circumstances, not good enough.

In my view the treatment of Mr. Maunder does not live up to the high standards of justice in this country. I ask, what sort of impression does this story leave on those who may be considering whether they should co-operate with the R.C.M.P. in security matters.

The seizure of his books, which were not returned to him until very recently after I spoke to the Solicitor General and then only in part, seems to me to have been in clear disregard of the provisions of the Criminal Code. The books were only returned recently, and many of the documents were found to be missing.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Maunder has paid a heavy penalty, a very heavy penalty for offences which in the light of his co-operation with the R.C.M.P. might well have been treated as minor, or at least visited with a modest penalty. He is a young man, a former officer in the army, and his reward for co-operation in the field of security has been the ruination of his business, the ruin of his reputation and a substantial term of imprisonment.

An hon. Member: Perhaps the Prime Minister would phone him.

Mr. Brewin: Mr. Chairman, I suggest that this case underlines the necessity for the creation of the office of ombudsman. As a member of parliament I do not have access to the documents of the R.C.M.P., but an ombudsman I take it, would have the right to look at this information and determine whether or not a grave injustice had been done.

Mr. Chairman, I urge even at this late date that a full and proper inquiry be undertaken by an impartial authority. If it is found that an injustice has been done, his name can be cleared by a statement that he is a loyal citizen who co-operated with security officers, deserving, in the Prime Minister's words: "praise and not censure." I suggest that some form of assistance might be made available to him to help him recover from the tragic position in which he has been put if not with the encouragement, at least with the connivance, of one branch of the law enforcement officers of the R.C.M.P.

I hope that the minister will look into this matter very seriously, and make sure that an injustice has not been done.

Mr. Pennell: Mr. Chairman, I will certainly take any suggestions coming from the hon. member for Greenwood seriously. I take no exception to his raising this point, because I know that he has a genuine and deep-seated feeling for the rights of the individual. However, I must say, with respect, that I cannot accept all the implications that he left during the course of his remarks.

● (4:40 p.m.)

I must say that in the brief time I have had the privilege of being the minister responsible in the house for the R.C.M.P. I have found them fair, efficient and courteous. I hope I do not appear to be taking flight from the question but I think it is clear that a full discussion of this matter might carry us into the sensitive area of security. I can only say this—as I told the hon. member, who was courteous enough to come to me privately—that I have conducted some investigations and the information coming to me does not confirm the submissions he has made today. I cannot give the full undertaking that he has suggested, but I would give an undertaking to look at the files closely again.

Mr. Herridge: I asked the Solicitor General some questions when the estimates were before the house. Is he able to answer them today?

Mr. Pennell: Yes, Mr. Chairman.