

Organized Crime

I would say, parenthetically, that the Solicitor General indicated in the House the other day that the same situation prevails in this government. When the government announced the restraint program on government expenditures, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) explicitly exempted from those restraints law enforcement officers and the RCMP. I continue to read the statement issued, as follows:

Organized crime can, of course, not be combatted by the police alone, we require the support of the public, the other components of the criminal justice system and our legislators. For example, speedy passage is required of amendments to the wiretap legislation which will permit us to more effectively investigate organized crime. Many of the amendments proposed in Bill C-51 are good ones but in our view they do not go far enough because they do not provide any effective expanded authority to wiretap in relation to organized crime. We understand that the CACP has recommended that the definition section of the legislation be changed to make this possible.

An hon. Member: Who wrote that?

Mr. Basford: If the question implies that I did, let me say that obviously I have no authority or control over the Ontario provincial police. I continue to read as follows:

● (1710)

We are unanimous in the position that a public inquiry in Ontario is not necessary at this time. With improved legislation and the support of the public and other components of the criminal justice system we are confident that with our policy of combined force operations which assist in providing effective detection and prosecution we can deal with the organized crime problem in Ontario.

Mr. Leggatt: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister of Justice would permit a brief question on that interesting document.

Mr. Basford: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Leggatt: The minister has very significant experience in terms of the operations of police forces. In his experience, has he had a request from a police force that he conduct a public inquiry into itself? In his experience as Minister of Justice or as a member of parliament, has this happened?

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, I really do not know what relevance that question has to this debate. The motion we are debating deals with appointing a commission to inquire into organized crime, and the question relates to some investigation into police operations, so I must admit that I have no idea what connection this has with the debate.

I have consistently said in this House over the last few days when this issue has come before us that since 1975 reports tabled in this House by solicitors general, made by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, by provincial attorneys general and by their police advisers, have shown that the present wiretap provisions are not effective in dealing with organized crime. When the legislation was first passed, Mr. Paul Atkey, who was a Conservative member from Toronto, worked very hard on that legislation. The scheme was that authorization to wiretap for a group of named offences could be obtained. Then there was concern that there should be some general section which would allow police authorities to use electronic surveillance against the organizers of organized crime. Wording was

[Mr. Basford.]

put into the second part of that section to deal with organized crime. We are advised by police authorities from one end of Canada to the other that that second part with that definition of organized crime is not working and that the purpose of parliament in 1974 is being defeated.

I plead with the hon. member for New Westminster to understand that in 1974 parliament, conscious of the civil rights of Canadians, endeavoured to word a section so that electronic surveillance could be used against organized crime.

Mr. Rodriguez: It was a minority government.

Mr. Basford: The evidence we have had since is that that section is not working. Therefore, surely it should be amended. I plead with the hon. member for New Westminster to consider carefully that in 1974 parliament endeavoured to deal with organized crime. We have been advised year after year by officials that that section is not working. Therefore, we should deal with the section in committee this week and amend it in accordance with the advice we are receiving from attorneys general, from police authorities and from the advice contained in the brief of the Canadian police chiefs.

The other aspect of this is the notification which can be limited to 90 days. Apparently, the CBC took 2½ years to make a program, most of which was public information which did not have to stand up in court and which did not have to be proved beyond a reasonable doubt. The CBC took 2½ years, yet the parliament of Canada, in its law, says to the police that in investigating organized crime they can be limited to 90 days.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Basford: Surely, as law enforcement officers, we have a responsibility to this parliament and to the people of Canada to put that on the record. As I have said a number of times in the committee and in this chamber, parliament has a duty to deal with this matter without rhetoric, without emotion and without politics.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Basford: But the hon. member for New Westminster, who I think is opposed to wiretapping of any kind, says that it would be good for the police to go out on the beat and to do some police work. That will catch ordinary house and garden criminals but it will not catch the godfathers of organized crime. Surely, the suggestion of the NDP that that is how we are going to investigate, charge and prosecute the godfathers of organized crime in this country shows that the NDP does not know what it is talking about.

Mr. Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the minister would accept a question at this time.

Mr. Basford: No, Mr. Speaker, but I will at the end of my remarks. My time is very limited. The hon. member for New Westminster, for whom I have an immense amount of respect, called upon us to appoint an inquiry into organized crime in