

ter and solicitors general have felt with respect to the operation of the RCMP as some sort of threat to government. We in the opposition will be vigilant to ensure that this inquiry does not lead to suggestions being made by the government and actions being taken by which the government will attempt to obtain partisan political control of the RCMP.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: This is the kind of complaint one hears in editorial comments about the way in which the government itself regards the RCMP. We are concerned about the interface, about the operation between the force and the Solicitor General, but if the government takes any steps to attempt to use this situation as a vehicle to obtain political control over the RCMP it will be fought to the bitter end by members of our party.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baldwin: Bring back impeachment!

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I must begin by saying I am just a little confused by the logic of the last point the hon. member made. If I understood the case which was being made, it was that in a democratic state it is absolutely essential for there to be political control.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Partisan political control.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Broadbent: Anyway, what is of basic importance in this matter is, precisely, political accountability, and I do not hesitate to say that this means political control. Of course if at some point the manner of political control becomes inappropriate then we make, in a free society, political judgments about the government concerned.

Mr. Clark: If we can get the evidence.

Mr. Broadbent: I wish to turn now to the subject of this inquiry. If I may say so, Your Honour did a real service to parliamentary democracy when you made the important ruling which enabled the House to conduct a serious debate on this matter, in the course of which all opposition parties had an opportunity to bring to the country's attention the serious mess we are now in, involving both the RCMP and the government.

It is a compliment to the parliamentary system and other free institutions that the editorial writers and the civil liberties groups, as well as others, should finally force the government to act in setting up an inquiry. However, I regret to say that the terms of reference of this inquiry will raise, in the mind of the public, at least as many serious questions as the inquiry was set up to answer. I, for one, cannot understand why the government has done what it has done in this respect, unless it is stupid or foolish or has something to cover up. I shall try to show what I mean in terms of the logic of my argument. There are some important questions to be raised about the terms of reference of this commission. I want to begin in the following

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way in terms of the sequence of getting the commission established.

We are now told that the Commissioner of the RCMP advises that RCMP members may have been involved in "activities which were not authorized or provided for by law". Important questions follow from that statement made this afternoon by the Solicitor General (Mr. Fox). The first question which occurs to me is: when did the commissioner learn this? When did he find out that this was the case? We have it on the authority of a number of ministers, including the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) not long ago, that something quite to the contrary was believed by the commissioner. When did he draw it to the minister's attention?

The minister did not tell us this afternoon when the government learned that there was perhaps a pattern of illegal activities on the part of the RCMP. Was it two weeks ago? When was it? I assume it was after the minister's statement in the House on June 17 when he said something to the contrary. Presumably, also, it was after he and the Prime Minister assured us that the Montreal incident of 1972 was an aberration.

On June 22 the Prime Minister assured me in the House that he had been informed that the Montreal incident was, and I quote from *Hansard* for June 22, "an aberration, an incident and an isolated one." That was just a couple of weeks ago. Now it turns out it was not an aberration or an isolated incident but that it was presumably part of a pattern. I repeat: when was the Solicitor General informed about this new situation? In replying to me on June 22 the Prime Minister was answering a question I raised about the allegations made by a former corporal in the RCMP who had alleged, back in 1972, that the kind of illegal activities which the minister today suggested were part of a pattern, did exist back in 1972. And it was on June 22 that the Prime Minister was replying to a question I put to him about the allegation by that corporal, who had made it in 1972 but repeated it just a couple of weeks ago.

Once again, the Prime Minister said—and this is important to the point I shall come to in a minute—that it was an isolated incident. It is clear now that it is not. It is clear, also, that the investigation allegedly undertaken, not in 1972 but in 1976, was a sham. When this matter was raised in the House a year ago, we were assured by the Solicitor General and the minister responsible to the House and to the people of Canada that this matter was investigated. We were assured last year that it was an isolated incident.

● (1550)

Surely some important questions arise. It is clear now, it seems to me, if I understand correctly the minister's statement, that there was a pattern of illegal activities by the RCMP—clearly the government believes that now, or it would not have set up this kind of inquiry—and I would think it is clear that this pattern of activities goes back at least to 1972.

If that is so, we on this side of the House are understandably concerned about the assurance that we were given, not only by