

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

### ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

#### ALLEGED ACTION TO STOP KEABLE COMMISSION—REASON FOR CHANGE IN ATTITUDE

**Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I might await the arrival in the House of the Solicitor General.

**An hon. Member:** Which one?

**Mr. Clark:** I shall not try to address questions to former solicitors general.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh!

**Mr. Clark:** Can the Solicitor General confirm or deny CBC radio reports this noon that the federal government is acting today to limit or stop the work of the Keable inquiry in the province of Quebec?

**Hon. Francis Fox (Solicitor General):** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I have instructed my attorneys to appear in front of the judge in a court in Montreal this morning. I understand the matter is presently before that judge. To my mind, because of the way in which it has been conducted, the inquiry has become an inquiry into the day to day operations of a federal government agency. It has become a general inquiry into the operations of the security services of Canada, and I do not believe this is the proper work to be done by a provincial government body. We have set up a federal commission of inquiry to look into all the practices and procedures of the security services; that is the proper place for this to be done. There is also the fact that should a federal commission of inquiry, set up by the federal government, attempt to inquire into the day-to-day operations of a provincial government agency, this would be seen to be beyond the scope and powers of the federal government. So I am asking a judge of the Superior Court in Montreal to decide whether or not the Keable Commission has gone beyond its terms of reference and is now acting beyond its constitutional powers.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Clark:** This House and the government have known for some time that the Keable inquiry, by its nature, would be looking into the activities of the security services. Having known this for some time, why did the government wait until now before acting on this question?

[Translation]

**Mr. Fox:** Mr. Speaker, it is quite obvious that the attorney general in the province of Quebec has all the necessary powers to inquire into criminal acts. It seems to me that if we note the recent actions of the Keable Commission, it is very clear when I examine the subpoenas which have been served on me that it is not interested only in those criminal acts which apparently it deems rather secondary. Now we are being requested to

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produce all kinds of documents regarding the organization and the operations of the security service in Canada. I for one believe that it is quite obvious that only the federal government can establish an inquiry commission to look into the daily operations of a federal agency. If the hon. member feels that a provincial commission of inquiry should have that kind of power, I will of course be interested to hear his point of view. It would mean that provincial parliaments rather than the Parliament of Canada have control over federal agencies.

● (1417)

[English]

**Mr. Clark:** Mr. Speaker, this minister knew and admitted to this House long ago that this inquiry would necessarily look into the activities of federal agencies. He even offered to co-operate with provincial inquiries in this matter. When was the decision taken for the government of Canada to change its attitude toward the Keable inquiry, and what specific activities, requests for testimony or revelations that might come before the Keable inquiry have caused the government of Canada now to change its mind, to change its course, to reverse itself, and to try to rule out the Keable inquiry into the activities of the security services?

[Translation]

**Mr. Fox:** Mr. Speaker, the position of people who sit on this side of the House has always been very clear and precise. We have not been vacillating between the positions put forward by the official opposition which claimed not so long ago that a provincial commission should be given the power to investigate all RCMP operations. From the beginning the government legal advisers have stated before the Keable Commission that we were ready to co-operate with the commissioners on specific illegal acts which might have been brought to the attention of the commission and which it would like to investigate.

We also said from the start—as I repeated on several occasions both outside and inside the House—we would not accept that, under the cover of investigating the administration of justice on specific criminal allegations, the Keable Commission should change its terms of reference and investigate the day to day operations of an agency that is essential to the Canadian national security and is in no way under provincial jurisdiction.

[English]

**Mr. Clark:** Mr. Speaker, we now have a situation where the government of Canada refuses to answer questions in the House on this matter. They tell us to go to the McDonald inquiry. The Prime Minister has told me that the testimony of ministers before the McDonald inquiry may very well be limited. The government has refused to co-operate with the Keable inquiry and with the Laycraft inquiry. Now the government is trying to stop the Keable inquiry.

My question is this. What is the government of Canada going to do next to try to stop an inquiry into the activities of the security services? What is the Government of Canada going to do next to stop Canadians from knowing what has