

*Privilege—Mr. Lawrence*

misleading answer I received. There is no question in my mind that the answer I received was deliberately and intentionally misleading and that, whatever the source of information the minister had, which information he gave to me, that source knew that the information which was supplied to me was misleading.

Just to prove this I would like to quote a very short extract from a portion of the evidence before the commission of inquiry concerning certain activities of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I refer to the proceedings recorded at volume 88 for November 1, 1978, at page 14480. This relates to the interception of mails by a law enforcement agency in this country. I want to quote from the testimony of former commissioner of the RCMP, William Higgitt, as follows:

Well, no secret in—it wasn't cast to the four winds—

By that he meant information relating to tampering with the mails by the RCMP.

—but there was no secret that this was one of the investigative aids that was, from time to time, resorted to on a very restricted basis.

In volume 84 of the proceedings before the royal commission for October 24, at page 13781 there is further testimony of former commissioner Higgitt as follows:

Certainly there was no secret of the fact that we were doing it and that secret was not held from the ministers. They were seeing the results in various forms.

What he means by "it" is the tampering with or the interception of the mails of this country by the law enforcement agency concerned.

From volume 88 at page 14555 of the proceedings before the McDonald commission on November 1, this week, I would like to quote these five lines from the testimony of former commissioner Higgitt:

That is not, that is not an assurance the RCMP is giving to the minister at all, and as a matter of fact, the practice was in matters of this kind—

Former commissioner Higgitt is referring here to the letter I received and the statement I received from the minister.

—the practice was very often ministers' letters were not exactly drafted on precise statements of fact.

There is simply no question in my mind that the testimony of Mr. Higgitt to the McDonald commission brought forward two facts which cannot be denied. One is that the essence of the letter to me was a falsehood, and the second is that it was a deliberate falsehood. It was known to be false at the time it was drafted and handed to the minister for his signature. Your Honour will note that I am not making the allegation—because it is no business of mine as far as it is relevant to the matter before this House today—that the minister knew it was a falsehood, but the fact is, as far as I and my attitude and my capabilities in this House and my relationship with my constituent are concerned, it was a falsehood. There is no question about that. I think this therefore breaches my privileges as far as this House is concerned.

I would like to give the House a short description of what this is all about. On November 15, 1973, I received a letter from a constituent. That letter made three very serious allegations. I must explain that this letter came from a young

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constituent who is a poet. He writes his poetry in what he calls the computer language of the day, and he has as his pseudonym his social insurance number. He claims that he is well known for his poetry under his social insurance number as a pseudonym. He also claims that he has received mail many times addressed to him under his pseudonym, namely, his social insurance number.

He said in his letter to me of November 15, 1973, that a letter was mailed to him by a friend. The letter was addressed simply to him by virtue of his social insurance number and his postal code. The next thing he knew about this letter addressed to him was when his friend telephoned him and informed him that two RCMP agents had arrived on the friend's doorstep, the doorstep of the sender of the letter, to interview him, with a photocopy of the piece of mail in their hands. The further allegation was that the sender was told by the two RCMP agents that not only had the sender been traced but also the identity of my constituent had been traced solely and exclusively through their SINs which were in that piece of mail. In other words, the only identification of the sender of the letter was his SIN. That is also a pertinent point.

● (1222)

As a result of receiving the letter of November 15 I sent a letter on November 21 to the then solicitor general. I sent the letter rather than asking an oral question in the House, as a common courtesy, a point which I think has been well taken many times by several ministers of the Crown. In that letter I referred very specifically to the point that this is a very important matter because, first, there was an allegation of an invasion of the privacy of my constituent; second, there was an allegation of the disruption of the mail; third, there was an allegation of a photostat being made of private correspondence; and fourth, there was an allegation that a piece of mail had been prevented from reaching my constituent. I suggest to you, sir, that these are four very important matters, which were important then as they are today.

At the same time I sent a similar letter to the then postmaster general under the same date. I received a reply on December 10, 1973, from the then postmaster general saying to me, generally speaking, that it was simply not possible to account for how the mail eventually got into the hands of the RCMP. It was simple, blunt, but at least frank and honest on the part of the postmaster general.

I received a reply from the then solicitor general on December 4, 1973, the last paragraph of which I should like to quote. It is very well known now because it has appeared in the press lately. The letter was written on ministerial letterhead, addressed to me as an MP dealing with a legitimate and proper inquiry from a constituent, and it was signed by the then solicitor general, the present Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Allmand). The last paragraph reads as follows:

I have been assured by the RCMP that it is not their practice to intercept the private mail of anyone and I trust that the above explanation will set your constituent's mind at ease.