

Oral Questions

the federal level, what immediate steps has the minister, along with the Attorney General and the Minister of Justice, taken to bring about an investigation by royal commission or otherwise, and I stress, or otherwise, into these matters?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, first, the premise of the question is wrong if it suggests that anyone has been pushed. I was asked by a reporter to respond to Mr. Shulman's statement within hours of his making it, and I made the comment which the hon. member has before him. I do not think that has anything to do with his question.

As far as the substantive part of the hon. member's question is concerned, I advise him that, according to the records of my department, no complaints have been brought to my department about the substance of the allegations which have been made against the union, in terms of beatings. That does not mean to say they did not occur. It means that no such complaints have come to the attention of the officials of the Department of Labour.

● (1520)

Second, if there are allegations of misconduct on the part of this union or various elements within it, and this may be subject to confirmation or advice from the Minister of Justice or Solicitor General, my opinion is that the provincial government is charged with responsibility for enforcement of the Criminal Code. They have ample power to set up royal commissions and go into this whole question if they feel that is warranted. Local and provincial police forces have power to investigate abuses of this kind and, indeed they should, if Mr. Shulman or anybody else has any information.

If Mr. Shulman or any member of this House wishes to bring to the attention of the federal government complaints of this kind, or they are of such a nature that they warrant investigation, we will of course be prepared to consider them. However, to do so here is questionable.

I might further indicate that as far as allegations against politicians are concerned I, like any other politician in this House, can defend myself, both in public and on the floor of this House. What is very serious here is there are allegations against federal officials, members of the public service who cannot defend themselves, and they are not being named. That is a practice that hon. members in this House should not condone under any circumstances.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): As a result, a cloud has been cast on the integrity of certain officials who cannot defend themselves.

Mr. Alexander: Nor can members of parliament.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): I think members of parliament can defend themselves. We have a public forum here. We can defend ourselves against what we consider to be unwarranted attacks.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

[Mr. Alexander.]

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): I am talking about a public servant.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I hesitate to interrupt the minister. His answer, although long, was certainly listened to very attentively which attests to the necessity for the length and substance of it. However, we are running out of time. Perhaps the answer could be abbreviated.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I have just one sentence to finish the answer to the hon. member. Because of the cloud of suspicion cast on certain unnamed officials, I and my deputy feel it might be related to officials in the Department of Labour since we have labour dealings with the SIU and so on. My department has asked the RCMP to investigate these allegations to see whether there is any substance to them as they may pertain to officials connected with the Department of Labour.

Mr. Alexander: Mr. Speaker, in light of the very serious nature of this matter, and in light of the minister's extreme concern about public officials, and I would certainly add to that group the members of parliament because we do not know who this member in the provincial legislature is talking about, notwithstanding the fact the minister has asked the Attorney General to bring in a report, and something tells me that report has already been asked for and is on the way, has the minister discussed this matter with the solicitor general for the province of Ontario and the attorney general for the province of Ontario, particularly when inside or outside the House some member of the Ontario legislature has indicated, and I quote, "What is stopping the investigation is that someone in Ottawa is getting paid off." Does the minister not think that is a serious enough matter, whether questionable or not in terms of authenticity, that he should discuss this matter with the solicitor general and attorney general of Ontario in order to determine what proper method we can take, particularly with regard to a royal commission or otherwise, in order to get to the bottom of this matter?

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): As I have indicated, Mr. Speaker, as far as these suggestions with regard to public servants in the Department of Labour are concerned, we have asked the RCMP to make inquiries. We are in the process of asking them to do this today. As far as the substance of these allegations is concerned, and that is all they are and no one is named, it is now perfectly within the competence of the attorney general of Ontario, and I am sure this is where a substantial portion of the membership reside who are subjected to this type of abuse, to set up a royal commission, if he feels the facts as turned over to him, if indeed they are turned over to him by Mr. Shulman, warrant such a commission.

As Minister of Labour, as far as I am concerned, no facts have been turned over to me by Mr. Shulman or anybody else other than this particular article. If the hon. member wishes to find out whether such facts that would warrant an investigation have been turned over to my colleagues responsible in this area, including the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, and whether they would warrant the action the hon. member is now putting forward, it is