

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Favreau: Mr. Speaker, it is clear that a thorough study of this report was made before lodging proceedings against Hal Banks. However, I can promise my hon. friend that I will take into account the comments implied in his question.

[Text]

LEGISLATION RESPECTING DISSEMINATION OF
"HATE" LITERATURE

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Reid Scott (Danforth): I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Justice. It arises out of newspaper reports concerning a fresh outbreak of anti-semitic literature in Toronto and Hamilton, one of which even goes so far as to claim that the Beatles are a Jewish plot to corrupt the world. Since most of this material is far more scurrilous, and in view of the need for some action, I wanted to ask the minister what progress he is making with the attorneys general of the provinces and their advice on amendments to the Criminal Code to deal with the dissemination of this type of material.

Hon. Guy Favreau (Minister of Justice): I do not feel it my duty to make any statement on my personal reaction to the performance of the Beatles, or to draw any inferences from comparisons with other people. However, as far as the last part of the question is concerned, I must remind my hon. friend that the answers I gave to these questions in the past have not been related to a conference with the attorneys general of the various provinces. I said that the attorney general of Ontario had undertaken to make a test case if the Royal Canadian Mounted Police were in a position to furnish evidence which would satisfy him that a complaint might be laid. We have not, as yet, been in a position to satisfy the attorney general that any such evidence was available, sufficient to establish at least a plausible identification of an accused with the hate literature. I repeat, there has been no understanding with respect to the holding of a meeting with the attorneys general, but the suggestion is one which I am ready to consider.

Mr. Scott: As a supplementary question, in view of the fact that part of the problem may be that the existing legislation is inadequate to permit successful prosecutions, would the Minister of Justice re-examine the Criminal Code to ascertain whether certain amendments to it would facilitate prosecutions respecting this type of material?

Mr. Favreau: With respect to the last question, Mr. Speaker, I must repeat that this is precisely a study which is presently being continued very actively, and I am also considering other ways and means to achieve the purpose sought, in a manner that would be as efficient and rapid as possible.

Mr. William Dean Howe (Hamilton South): As a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, is the minister aware of the specific distribution of hate literature in the Hamilton area recently? I have received a letter or sample of the literature distributed in the Hamilton area, and I ask whether anything specific is being done to combat this.

Mr. Favreau: Mr. Speaker, the right hon. Leader of the Opposition put a question to me which related to that particular literature which, if I am not mistaken, consisted of a blue card with the ill spelling "This is the end". This has been referred to my officers to peruse in their study, in conjunction with the material already gathered.

Hon. Michael Starr (Ontario): As a further supplementary question, in view of the suggestion made some months ago by an interested delegation for an amendment to the Criminal Code in respect to this matter, will the minister advise whether this suggested amendment has been rejected both by himself and by the officials of his department?

Mr. Favreau: Mr. Speaker, that suggested amendment is one of those which are being considered. So far as I am concerned I am not satisfied that there may not be a better formula to define or to determine, but I must say that that amendment has not been rejected. It is still being studied and looked into, in comparison with other formulas that have been devised.

INDIAN AFFAIRS

INQUIRY AS TO SETTING UP OF COURT OF CLAIMS

On the orders of the day:

Mr. W. H. A. Thomas (Middlesex West): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. Could the right hon. gentleman advise the house whether it is still the intention of the government to establish an Indian claims commission and, if so, could he give us some idea when this is likely to be done?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is the intention of the government to do this and at as early a date as possible.