

SIU

entire matter attempted to shift, and still does, all responsibility to the province, conveniently forgetting that it had a role to play in this very serious matter. There have been allegations for some time describing an atmosphere of tyranny and fear within the organization, with the executives riding roughshod over the rank and file members. There are allegations of violence, voting irregularities and improper hiring hall activities, all of which should have been dealt with long before this.

Now the minister comes before us and says that he could not move prior to April 29. The minister says that that is not true. He can think what he wants. All I know is that his statement speaks for itself. I let the minister carry on with his comments, but he has rudely interrupted me. The minister might at least have the decency to sit there and take his lumps. It is necessary that we who are couched with responsibility determine who controls the waterfront and, indeed, who controls the union and to what extent, particularly when it is alleged that there may be offshore interference.

I believe the terms of reference of the minister leave much to be desired. They are very restrictive. I do not know what they mean. It is difficult to understand what they mean. I will give the minister some advice in terms of what I think he should have spelled out. All of these allegations which have attracted public attention, not only those concerned with individual criminal occurrences but also those which unquestionably relate to the general conduct of the union, have a direct effect upon the civil rights, freedom of choice and working conditions of the members, and accordingly one can readily conclude that all the allegations are actually symptomatic of gross mismanagement of the union's affairs. This is one reason the inquiry is needed.

As far back as December 10, 1974, the province of Ontario made known its views. The minister says no, but I know there is a lot of hanky-panky which takes place. When the minister tells me that the province of Ontario will not co-operate, I say shame on the minister. He is attempting to shaft the province of Ontario just because it is preparing for an election. If one reads that statement very closely, one will notice that three of the six pages are taken up in blaming the province of Ontario for inaction. Let me say me say this without prejudging the matter.

● (1520)

An hon. Member: Here come the judge!

Mr. Alexander: I do not particularly like that comment. I advise the hon. member to be careful in the future because I am liable to take it the wrong way. I will not this time. The hon. member gets my point. If he does not, see me later on.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Alexander: Without prejudging this matter, I believe that trade unions must not only be above suspicion but must seem to be above suspicion. Accordingly, any legitimate union should not be adverse to having its affairs scrutinized. As a matter of fact, I believe the president has suggested that he would welcome any inquiry. I hope he still stands by those words, even though I may

[Mr. Alexander.]

be paraphrasing them. Without restricting the generality of any terms of reference—and I do not accept the type of terms of reference which the minister indicated to us today—I believe such reference should include the following allegations: violence, intimidation, other criminal occurrences, voting irregularities, blacklisting, all hiring hall activities, the matter of dues, misuse of union funds, power struggles within the union dating from at least 1971, and political impropriety.

I should like to say, in conclusion, that we in this party ask, indeed demand, that any recommendation stemming from the inquiry be acted upon as expeditiously as possible in order to ensure that if this union has not been democratized, it will be, and if there are charges to be laid, they will be laid.

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, here is a case which has been in the headlines every day for almost a year. Finally, after all these months, we get a statement and a proposal from the minister which I consider be one of the most disappointing I have ever heard from any minister in the years in which I have been in parliament. After all these months the minister has laboured and produced a mouse. The minister proposes to do as little as possible, certainly as little as he is legally required to do. The only way he could do less than he proposes would be to do nothing at all.

The minister is critical of the Ontario provincial government. He claims that they should have co-operated with the federal government and he deplores their failure to do so. If it is true that they have refused to co-operate with him and to supply him with information which they have, then I deplore their failure to co-operate with him. But having said that, I have to say to the minister that the terms of reference which he is giving to the investigating body which he proposes to set up are far too narrow.

That body should have the power to investigate all the allegations which have been made. I will not list them all, but let me give a few of the allegations that have been made: there was political patronage; there were illegal political contributions made to important members of parliament, probably to cabinet ministers; there was, and is, violence on the docks; seamen had been beaten up; there is a lack of democracy in the SIU. If the minister really wanted to know something about the SIU past and present, he did not have to appoint a commission. The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) was a part of the team of lawyers who acted in the inquiry, the Norris commission, and I am sure he could have filled in the government quite extensively about the misdeeds of the SIU in the not too distant past.

The minister says that on the basis of a statement made on April 29, 1975, by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lang)—I quote from page 5 of the minister's statement—it was decided not to proceed with the request by the Ontario government for an inquiry into allegations involving the SIU. The Minister of Justice said the evidence he had received did not warrant an inquiry and the Minister of Labour would have to decide whether an inquiry was justified under the Canada Labour Code.

In view of the fact that one of the allegations is that present ministers of the Crown in this government