

Oral Questions

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST SEAFARERS' INTERNATIONAL UNION—RESPONSIBILITY FOR INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED IMPROPRIETY OF MINISTERS

Mr. Joe Clark (Rocky Mountain): Is the Prime Minister leaving to the RCMP the responsibility to conduct an inquiry into the question of the propriety of conduct of ministers of the Crown in matters relating to the SIU? If not, who is responsible for any inquiry that might be undertaken into the question of the propriety of the actions of ministers of the Crown in this matter?

● (1500)

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it is not up to the police to determine questions of inquiry, or even, for that matter, I believe to determine ultimate prosecution. It is up to the police to discover the facts. They are looking into the facts on the basis of some allegations which were made. I believe that this is the type of inquiry which, at the request of the Department of Labour, the Solicitor General has set up, and the police are looking into these facts. It was on the basis of this type of inquiry by the police that a preliminary report was made to me by the Solicitor General.

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ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

SUGGESTED INDEPENDENT INQUIRY TO PROTECT INTEGRITY OF FORCE

Mr. Bill Jarvis (Perth-Wilmot): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Prime Minister. In light of the fact that section 5 of the RCMP Act gives control and management of the force to the commissioner, who, however, is, if I may quote the wording, "under the direction of the minister"—that is, the Solicitor General—and in light of the fact that the Solicitor General has an obvious personal involvement in the SIU matter and in fact is one of those singled out in the interim report, I ask the Prime Minister whether, if for no other reason, he does not consider the protection of the integrity of the RCMP sufficiently important as to order an independent inquiry, so that the RCMP is not put in the untenable position of investigating the Solicitor General, under whose direction it operates?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, there is a long standing practice in the RCMP if they are investigating ministers—and I believe this practice must have existed in the days when the Conservatives formed the government—that the commissioner or his representative makes me aware of any such representations against ministers. If it is found—and certainly this is hypothetical—that there is in some way involvement of ministers, then it is reported to me, as I am sure would have been the case in the time of the right hon. gentleman from Prince Albert.

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: The Solicitor General is rising on a question of privilege. I listened carefully to the question of the

[Mr. Trudeau.]

hon. member for Perth-Wilmot to see whether or not there might be some awkwardness to the situation in which the RCMP finds itself, but I failed to hear any allegation that would in any way give rise to a question of privilege on the part of the Solicitor General. However, I am prepared to listen to the Solicitor General.

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, since last week I checked the section in the RCMP act referred to, and which has been referred to several times by the opposition, and I found that the section was written at a time when the Minister of Justice was responsible for the RCMP, and he was also the attorney general in charge of prosecutions. As the hon. member might know, in 1966 a new department of the Solicitor General was set up whereby he answers for the RCMP in the House of Commons and the Minister of Justice, who is still the Attorney General of Canada, is in charge of prosecutions. So that the section referred to by the hon. member, and which, as I say, has been referred to by others, really no longer applies today in the way it did when the act was written.

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LABOUR CONDITIONS

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST SEAFARERS' INTERNATIONAL UNION—REQUEST FOR INDEPENDENT INQUIRY

Mr. Bill Jarvis (Perth-Wilmot): Mr. Speaker, may I put a further supplementary question to the Prime Minister; I will make no comment on the question of privilege that has been raised. In light of the Solicitor General's statements, both in this House and elsewhere, describing the character and integrity of Mr. Shulman, and whether such statements are accurate or otherwise, I ask the Prime Minister, in regard to an investigation of the SIU, whether it is not government policy that such investigation must clearly be void of any suggestion whatever of partiality or bias or lack of independence. Therefore, I ask the Prime Minister whether he does not consider an independent inquiry the only means of assuring this appearance of impartiality and lack of bias?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think we are back to the earlier confusion between the two types of inquiry; at least I must confess I am confused. I am not sure whether the question refers to an inquiry into the violence perpetrated, or allegedly perpetrated, by the SIU, or an inquiry into the alleged misconduct of a minister on this side.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: I am sure the hon. member does not need any help in asking his question, but if he would clarify that point I might be able to come out of my state of confusion and give him an answer.

Mr. Jarvis: Mr. Speaker, may I put a final supplementary question to the Prime Minister. In light of the fact that it is becoming obviously more and more difficult to sever these problems, I simply ask the Prime Minister, since in the interim report there is mention by the RCMP of the minister under whose direction the force operates—