

Oral Questions

progress and I trust we shall be able to announce the new policy within a few weeks.

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[English]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE**STEPS TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS WITH FIELD OFFICERS**

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Solicitor General. In testimony yesterday before the McDonald commission by former RCMP Commissioners Higgitt and Nadon, it was revealed that they and the then solicitor general misled members of the House of Commons as to RCMP practices relating to wiretaps in criminal investigations. As an internal document prepared then stated, there was a gaping abyss between policy and practice and in fact the law was being violated.

What steps has the Solicitor General taken to ensure that this kind of massive breakdown in communication, to put it in its best light, between the RCMP in the field and the Solicitor General will not occur today? What specific mechanisms has the Solicitor General in place to assure members of Parliament that they and the Solicitor General are not being misled by senior RCMP officials about matters of RCMP practice in the field?

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General): Madam Speaker, to begin with, as the hon. member knows, I will not comment on the day to day matters which are being reviewed by the McDonald commission. I am looking forward to the completion of its work which is scheduled for May 15, and which I continue to believe is the date on which the government will receive its final report.

An hon. Member: Oh, come on.

Mr. Kaplan: As to changes that have taken place in the organization of the relationship between the Solicitor General and the force, a great deal will depend on our consideration of the recommendations which will be coming from the McDonald commission. But in the meantime, as I have indicated frequently in the House and when I have appeared before the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, I maintain the closest possible relationship between myself and the RCMP and the security service to assure that I am being kept fully informed about the operations of the force and the operations of the security service, to be sure that their activities are lawful, that they are appropriate, and that the operational policies which are in place and which I have constantly under review are in fact being obeyed.

SOLICITATION OF SUPPORT FROM PROVINCIAL ATTORNEYS GENERAL

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Madam Speaker, some of us think that the relationship at times is a bit too close. It was also revealed yesterday at the commission hearings that

RCMP commissioner Higgitt in 1973 was attempting discreetly to solicit provincial attorneys general for their endorsement of the RCMP's views on wiretap legislation then before Parliament.

My supplementary question is: in view of this clear attempt to do an end run around the then solicitor general and to subvert the parliamentary process at the time, will the Solicitor General inform the House whether the present commissioner or his officials have, either directly or indirectly, solicited provincial attorneys general for their support for RCMP views on proposed legislation on RCMP review, or mail opening? Will the minister tell the commissioner that any such activities are completely unacceptable to this Parliament?

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General): Madam Speaker, if I felt it were necessary, I certainly would tell that to the commissioner, because the RCMP should not be engaging in political advocacy. But I can assure the hon. member that their policy is not to do so, and I am satisfied from discussions we have had on the subject that they do not do so.

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PIPELINES**NORMAN WELLS PIPELINE—IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL ENERGY BOARD DECISION**

Mr. Dave Nickerson (Western Arctic): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. It is on the same subject as that of the hon. member for Oshawa, namely, the NEB recommendation respecting the Norman Wells pipeline. My question is from a slightly different perspective.

Contrary to what the hon. member for Oshawa said, I can assure the minister and the House that this report was favourably received in the north and received a wide measure of public support.

An hon. Member: By whom?

Mr. Nickerson: Can the minister assure the House that he will proceed as expeditiously as possible to reach a cabinet decision to implement the NEB report? Can he give us an estimate of when that decision will be reached?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Madam Speaker, I heard the representations of the hon. member. It is obvious to the whole House that they are quite opposite to the representations of the Leader of the NDP. But my answer to the Leader of the New Democratic Party stands, that consultations will be held. Now that we know the decision of the National Energy Board, consultations will be held with all those people who feel seriously affected by this decision. After those consultations have been held, I will, combined with my colleague, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, go to cabinet with an assessment of the situation for a decision by the govern-