

Supply—Justice

other commission, to deal with various matters.

What we ask the inquiry to do is to give us the opinion of its commissioner or commissioners and if, when the opinion is tabled, it agrees with the opinion of the government then the government can say they have been proven right by the board. If the opinion is contrary to that of the government, then the government has the responsibility of doing what it likes. If it refuses to reinstate Spencer despite such a finding, then we and the country would know. But I do not think that would happen.

I have greater faith in the members of the government who are in the same party as the hon. member for Mount Royal than he has himself. Perhaps he knows better. However, if an independent commissioner investigated this matter and found the government wrong either in dismissing the man or depriving him of his insurance or pension, then I have faith that the government would set things right and that it would not be necessary for the commissioner to make any decision or order in that regard.

• (2:40 p.m.)

Mr. Rankin tells me that Mr. Spencer is exceedingly concerned about his position. The other day I gave Mr. Spencer's age to the house. The right hon. Leader of the Opposition perhaps did not hear me. I understand I was right in the information I have received. He is 57 to 58 years of age; he is very ill. I am not trying to do any tear jerking, but surely these things are relevant to the consideration of a sentence when a person is found guilty. He is very ill, as has been said. He had a lung removed because of lung cancer of which he is not yet cured. As a very ill person he may be, as I understand, very disturbed in other ways. All these things, it seems to me, make it absolutely necessary that there be no suspicion that he has been denied any of his rights as a citizen of Canada, and particularly as an employee of this government, to which he is entitled.

An hon. Member: Has he a family?

Mr. Lewis: I really cannot say. From the beginning I determined not to direct questions about him personally. I said to myself, "you are not going to be addressing a jury. You are going to be addressing a group of pretty cold and objective members of parliament. You had better not try any of this tear jerking". And I left personal questions alone.

[Mr. Lewis.]

I was very interested in the reply of the Prime Minister this morning about the answer with respect to the letter from Mr. Rankin addressed, as I understand to Mr. Milligan, an assistant secretary of the Privy Council, in which Mr. Rankin asked what the definition of misconduct was. Mr. Rankin had been informed in a letter from Mr. Milligan, so he tells me, that Mr. Spencer had been dismissed for misconduct. Mr. Rankin wrote and asked, "What do you mean by misconduct in this case"? I understand he has been told that he cannot be given an answer now. He has to find it somewhere else.

The importance of that letter, as I see it, were I to have received it from the lawyer of a person who had been dismissed, would be such that I would know perfectly well from it that the person dismissed was not satisfied. I say to the members of this house, whether members of the Liberal party or members not in the government, that if they try to suggest to the house that Mr. Spencer was satisfied they have failed to understand the obvious import of the letters addressed to Mr. Milligan. If they do understand that, then they have done something which should not have been done. It is perfectly clear from the correspondence, as Mr. Rankin also told me over the telephone, that he was conveying to the government the dissatisfaction of Mr. Spencer over his removal from his job.

I ask the minister and the Prime Minister: In heaven's name what wrong would there be in saying to the country, this case has raised a great deal of interest, as it obviously has, this case requires another look, as it obviously does; we are not going to shut the door on all this, we will appoint a commissioner to make an inquiry?

My attention was drawn a little while ago to the issue of the *Winnipeg Free Press* for Wednesday, March 2. I appeal to members of the government to listen to the paragraph I am about to read. After referring to Mr. Cardin's appeal to trust him it says:

Given perfection in all men this is a fair enough appeal. But many people have less than 100 per cent faith in the absolute impartiality of any police organization and in the absolute wisdom of any body of men, even federal cabinet ministers. They have a larger degree of faith in the due processes of justice than in the private decisions of some men. While many Canadians are quite prepared to take the word of Mr. Cardin and Mr. Pearson that no injustice has been done to Mr. Spencer, others are not. In the circumstances, the wisest course of action for the government would seem to be to turn the case over to a private judicial inquiry.