

*Oral Questions***PENITENTIARIES****PRINCE ALBERT—REQUEST FOR INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CONDITIONS IN INSTITUTION**

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Solicitor General. It has to do with the sit-down in Prince Albert Penitentiary. The cause of the sit-down is, of course, still very serious. The prison as a whole has been in a state of deep frustration in recent days. There has been no criticism of the director or assistant director of the penitentiary or, indeed, of the custodial staff. The reason for the sit-down is the fact that an overwhelming percentage of those in the prison are young people, natives or Métis and there are no effective programs for them. Would he, in order to guard against any repetition of what has taken place, have an independent inquiry made, presided over, say, by the Chief Justice of Saskatchewan, to the end that those in penitentiaries will come to the conclusion, and properly so, that any injustices which they claim exist will be removed thereby assuring a degree of peace in the penitentiary which will not be followed again by what has happened in the last ten days—two suicides among the inmates.

• (1430)

Hon. Warren Allmand (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, I was advised just before the question period began that the sit-down strike at Prince Albert Penitentiary had been settled and that everybody is back in their places without any violence or trouble. The reason given for the sit-down strike was the inadequacy of medical services in the penitentiary. This is being investigated. With respect to the matters mentioned by the right hon. member, the high proportion of native people in our penitentiaries, we recognise this problem. Last year we held a federal-provincial conference on this subject at which five or six major native organizations were represented. We have established follow-up procedures and progress is being made. But it remains a serious problem as pointed out by the right hon. member.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The question I placed before the minister was this: in order to remove the deep resentment which has apparently developed regarding alleged wrongs, possibly unjustified, will he not, to secure peace in that institution, permit an independent investigation by a judge such as I have suggested?

Mr. Allmand: I do not think that is necessary at the present time. As I say, we have been in touch with the native groups. We have established a committee to deal with this problem. The committee is made up of a leader of the native groups, the Métis and the Indians; we are making progress in dealing with this problem and I do not think a commission of the kind suggested is necessary now.

Mr. Diefenbaker: You would not say that if you knew the conditions there.

[Mr. Trudeau.]

AGRICULTURE**REQUEST FOR TABLING OF MR. FERGUSON'S LETTER OF RESIGNATION FROM MARKETING COUNCIL—REFUSAL OF ONTARIO MINISTER TO SIGN CEMA AGREEMENT**

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Agriculture. In view of press reports that Ralph Ferguson resigned as Vice-Chairman of the National Farm Products Marketing Council because he was dissatisfied with the application of the CEMA quota system limiting production in Ontario, and that he tendered his resignation in a letter to the minister outlining his disagreement with the CEMA system, I ask the minister whether he will table Mr. Ferguson's letter for the information of the House and the public? In addition, will he inform us whether it is correct that the Ontario minister of agriculture has refused to sign the 1976 quota allocation agreement with that agency and, if that is the case, what plans he has, in consequence, for that egg marketing agency?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Ferguson did submit his resignation and I have accepted it. As I said to an hon. member from the other side of the House who asked me last week, he submitted his resignation last year and I asked him to stay on one year longer; he wanted to return to his farm. He did make several suggestions in the letter that a certain province was not living up to the agreement.

Some hon. Members: Table the letter!

Mr. Whelan: I do not have to table the letter because it was a confidential letter written to me by a member of the Council.

Mr. Hees: You have to table it because you have referred to it.

Mr. Whelan: I do not have to table it until I obtain the concurrence of the person who wrote the letter and follow the correct procedure. He made accusations in the letter about the allocation of the quota. These accusations have been made known to the Council and it is up to the Council to investigate and try to work the matter out. As far as the minister of agriculture in the Province of Ontario is concerned, if they do not want CEMA I do not force CEMA on anyone. If they don't want it and don't want to live up to the agreements, they are the ones who will destroy CEMA, not me.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): On a point of order. The minister has referred to the contents of a letter which he now refuses to table.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Without going into detail with respect to the precedents, the minister is, of course, obliged to table a document if he has referred to it in the course of debate and advances an argument accordingly; if he initiates a reference to a document he ought to be obliged to table it. However, this certainly has never been held to apply to a situation in which a minister has simply been asked a question about a document and given an answer.