

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

power to inquire into all matters it wishes. The hon. member conveniently forgets that a number of initiatives have been taken by this government which relate in good part to the problem of accountability raised by the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent). I refer to the changes in the Protection of Privacy Act in 1974 concerning both the criminal side of the operations of the RCMP and the security side of the operations of the RCMP.

The hon. member referred to the situation in 1973. Naturally we are all interested in finding out whether some forms of criminal activity were entered into by some police officers—as a former attorney general the hon. member should be well placed to know that with a force of 19,000 people spread across the country it may unfortunately happen that some person committed an act that he ought not to have committed. I do not think that is sufficient reason to say that it is necessarily a pattern of activity. It has raised sufficient concern in our minds, however, that we feel that full light should be shed upon the matter.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, since the commission will be committed to scrutinize seriously the various break-in situations, in cases where they would discover that an RCMP officer acted in cooperation with other police forces, either the Montreal Urban Community's or the Sûreté du Québec, would they have under their terms of reference the authority to compel officers of those other police forces to give evidence before them in order to further clarify the case? If so, would such evidence be kept secret or made available to the public?

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, in answer to this, I would say that under the exact terms of reference they are to scrutinize the actions of the police force for which we are responsible federally. The aim is not to inquire into the actions of municipal or provincial police forces. The commission, however, has all the powers of a commission of inquiry, including that of issuing subpoenas, of requiring appearances before the commission and, where Canadian citizens wherever they may be in Canada had information of such a nature as to enlighten them on RCMP operations, clearly the Commission could require them to appear. As far as in camera proceedings are concerned, the commission is instructed by the government that all hearings must be held in camera in matters involving the national security of Canada. In other matters, the commission has discretionary powers to decide whether hearings are to be held in public or, in keeping with the inherent rights of citizens to be protected against allegations unless there is some degree of evidence against them, to decide that those parts of the hearings that could affect the civil rights of Canadian citizens should also be held in camera.

[*English*]

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): Mr. Speaker, the government takes this matter of national security and intelligence so seriously that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) chaired the cabinet committee on national security and

[Mr. Fox]

intelligence. On that committee served the then solicitor general, the then minister of justice, and the then minister of national defence. Since there was interplay between that committee and the RCMP through the Solicitor General my question is this: Does the government intend to have the Prime Minister, who was the chairman of the committee, or the secretary of that committee, testify before the commission under oath on those incidents which will be exposed in the inquiry?

● (1640)

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman's question relates, apparently, to some grandiose scheme or plot. He spoke of evidence. I do not think we have seen evidence of the type of grandiose plot he described in his question. It would be up to the commission of inquiry to decide on the conduct of this inquiry and, if it was found in the incidents the hon. member referred to that there was a cover-up, it could ask witnesses to appear. On the other hand, speaking hypothetically, if the commission came to the conclusion there had been no cover-up, and if people were entitled to assume that the investigation the Montreal Urban Community Police had launched would come to a head, I suppose the commission might not pursue the matter further, in the belief there is nothing else to pursue. The province of Quebec instituted a commission of inquiry, which is considering precisely why the inquiry conducted by the Montreal Urban Community Police into the APLQ affair came to an end.

Mr. Oberle: The minister accuses me of introducing another grandiose scheme to the House. Those grandiose schemes, so-called, to which I drew the minister's attention probably led to the setting up of this inquiry. The minister is still hanging on to information he obtained from me, and I intend to give him additional information. Being a layman and not a lawyer, I do not know if certain sections of the Federal Court Act, particularly section 41(2), will apply to the inquiry being launched. I am referring to provisions allowing the minister to sign an affidavit, on the strength of which he can withhold evidence from the court if it is deemed as being injurious to national security, cabinet secrecy, federal-provincial relations, and so on. I ask, will that provision of the Federal Court Act be waived in this particular inquiry?

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, I hate to disappoint the hon. member, but none of his wild accusations or allegations led me to change my stand. After following up by way of investigation the allegations the hon. member made, I was not able to find evidence of criminal conduct or criminal wrongdoing. Be that as it may, the question the hon. member raised a number of times in the House is presently being investigated by the Ontario Police Commission, and I am content to leave it at that for the moment.

To answer the hon. member's specific question, if I were to exercise the rights which parliament confers on me under sections 41 and 42 of the Federal Court Act during the course of the inquiry I am sure the hon. member would hear about it and I would be fully accountable for my actions in that regard, as usual to the House of Commons.