

Oral Questions

REASON FOR APPOINTMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL DARE AS DIRECTOR GENERAL, RCMP SECURITY SERVICE

Mr. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a last supplementary question to the Solicitor General. Since the policy of the government has invariably been to fill top level vacancies in the RCMP by promotions from within the force, the last rare exception being the appointment of Major General J. H. MacBrien over 40 years ago, will the minister explain the government's departure from this policy in the recent appointment of Lieutenant General Dare of the police and security planning and analysis group as Director General, Security Service, of the RCMP?

• (1420)

Hon. Warren Allmand (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, General Dare was appointed to replace a man who was also not a member of the RCMP, Mr. Starnes, who was appointed some years ago because it was felt there should be some civilians in the security area of the RCMP.

POLICE AND SECURITY PLANNING AND ANALYSIS GROUP—POLICY RESPECTING COLLECTION OF DATA AND MAINTENANCE OF FILES ON PUBLIC SERVANTS

Mr. Robert C. Coates (Cumberland-Colchester North): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary for the Solicitor General. Will the minister advise the House whether it is government policy to have the police and security planning and analysis group collect data on public servants? If so, is it government policy to maintain files of information, including any indication of the political affiliation of public servants and the frequency of their communication with Members of Parliament, and are such files available to the cabinet through the minister?

Hon. Warren Allmand (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, there are many questions there but generally the answer is no. There is no such policy.

POLICE AND SECURITY PLANNING AND ANALYSIS GROUP—INVESTIGATION OF LABOUR UNIONS—POSSIBLE USE OF MONITORING EQUIPMENT

Mr. Robert C. Coates (Cumberland-Colchester North): Is the minister aware of whether the police and security planning and analysis group conducts investigations of labour unions in Canada and the leaders of unions, and can he inform the house if there is a policy which permits the use of electronic monitoring equipment in such investigations?

Hon. Warren Allmand (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, the group referred to is not an operational group. It does not conduct investigations. It is merely a policy, planning and advisory group and is not operational.

[Mr. Allmand.]

PENITENTIARIES

PRINCE ALBERT—SHOOTING OF GUARD BY PRISONER—ATTACKS ON OTHER GUARDS—RELIEF OF OVERCROWDING

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Solicitor General whether he has looked into the seriously developing situation at the Saskatchewan penitentiary at Prince Albert with respect to an outbreak a couple of weeks ago involving the shooting and wounding of a guard by a prisoner who is serving a life sentence for murder but was out of the penitentiary and had a gun, and also other attacks on guards that have taken place there very recently?

Hon. Warren Allmand (Solicitor General): Yes, Mr. Speaker. There was an unfortunate incident on March 30 where an inmate had been taken outside the penitentiary to a hospital. Once the handcuffs were removed he drew a homemade zip gun and shot one of the guards. The guard was not seriously wounded but it was still a serious incident. To protect the guards and staff the penitentiary service has standing orders regarding the frisking of inmates who are taken out of the penitentiary. In this case, although the guards had frisked the inmate before taking him out of the penitentiary, for some reason they did not discover the double-barrelled zip gun which was later drawn on them and used to shoot a particular guard. It was an unfortunate incident. As a result of this incident we are conducting a thorough search of Prince Albert penitentiary to discover other zip guns and further contraband has been discovered.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank the new Solicitor General for being so generous in answering the question at such length. I appreciate that very much. I would ask him whether or not action will be taken to remove numbers of prisoners from this institution which today is grossly overcrowded? I would also ask him whether action will be taken in respect of those prisoners who have a gun or knife record behind them to remove them therefrom, for the guards are facing grave dangers and so state. I should add that my informants fear that from day to day the situation worsens.

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, there is a serious population problem at the Saskatchewan penitentiary as well as at other penitentiaries in the prairie region. In the estimates which are now before the House we request funds to expand our facilities on the Prairies and also to expand our staff so we can better handle this increased population. I would also like to say that disciplinary measures will be taken with respect to men who are found with contraband weapons, and in particular the man who was involved in this case.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Chair will recognize the hon. member for a last supplementary question on this subject and then recognize the hon. member for Northwest Territories.