

Public Order Act, 1970

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Mr. Chairman, I agree with the hon. member that we should be against terrorism and crime. This bill only deals with force used or crime used to overthrow a government in Quebec with respect to the rest of Canada, whether by the FLQ or another association that might succeed it. I agree with the hon. member, but the target of this bill is the FLQ.

Mr. Matte: In other words, Mr. Chairman, in order that we may come to understand each other, we could easily, through this clause, attack the P.Q. for instance. What is the opinion of the hon. minister in that respect?

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): It is only the overthrow of the government by persons or groups of persons who advocate the use of force or crime or violence, which is faced. Therefore—

Mr. Matte: Mr. Chairman, I understand as far as the use of force and terrorism is concerned. We all agree on that, there is no doubt about it. However, as to the second point, it is that we could eventually use it “as a means of accomplishing the same or substantially the same governmental change within Canada.” The P.Q. could advocate “the same government change” as—

The Deputy Chairman: Order, please. The Chair wonders whether the hon. member for Champlain is discussing the amendment before the House or clause 3 itself. At the present time, we have before us an amendment which, if I correctly understand the English version, seems to link this legislation to the province of Quebec. At this stage, it might be advisable not to go too far with other points that could have reference to clause 3.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Mr. Chairman, in reply to the question put by the hon. member, I should say that all the words have to be read as a whole. The bill is directed at the FLQ and any eventual successor group. The FLQ is defined as “any group of persons or association that advocates the use of force or the commission of crime as a means of accomplishing governmental change within Canada—” All these words have to be taken as a whole. The words “force” and “crime” cover everything.

I do not see the problem faced by the hon. member. I appreciate his viewpoint; however, I believe that he should not worry.

Mr. Asselin: Mr. Chairman, may I ask an explanation from the Minister of Justice?

The words “the same governmental change” have an extensive and at the same time a quite restrictive meaning. What would happen, for instance, if some members of the FLQ kidnapped a prominent government figure or a member of Parliament to force the government to enact legislation designed to nationalize, let us say, Bell Canada? That could happen.

The words used now are “the same governmental change”. A similar definition appears in the Criminal Code about sedition. What would happen if the FLQ

resorted to violence to compel the government to enact legislation?

• (8:50 p.m.)

Let us take as an example the nationalization of Bell Canada. Suppose some people kidnap the Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner) and tell this government: We shall not free the minister unless you nationalize Bell Canada. Would such a tactic be considered an effort aimed at a governmental change? Then, the law is neither comprehensive nor clear enough.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): This would apply merely to a change or an overthrow of government. I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that it could not be clearer.

Mr. La Salle: Just one comment, Mr. Chairman. On page 1, line 11 of the bills it says:

...as a means of accomplishing governmental change within Canada with respect to the Province of Quebec...

Would it not be possible to simply say: “as a governmental change within Canada with respect to the provinces or their relationship to Canada”?

I do not see why the Province of Quebec is the only one mentioned, as if the FLQ could be active only in Quebec. I wonder if this is not simply a question of a special law for Quebec. I am aware that under the circumstances, this is maybe so...

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Mr. Chairman, according to the FLQ manifesto, its purpose is to overthrow by force the Quebec government or the Quebec government in relation to the rest of Canada, i.e. to separate Quebec from Canada by force.

In order to limit the object of this bill, only the FLQ is mentioned, the goals of which must be defined, namely overthrowing the Quebec government by force, by crime, or separating the Quebec government from the rest of Canada, by force or by crime.

Such are the goals of the FLQ and that is why the scope of the bill is so restricted.

Mr. Asselin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to put another question.

The Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. member for Joliette.

Mr. La Salle: I would like to ask the minister whether in his opinion the FLQ has any intention whatsoever of undermining the Canadian government.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I did not understand the question.

Mr. La Salle: I would like to know whether, in the view of the minister, the FLQ will attempt or has attempted to destroy the Canadian government.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Perhaps, in relation to Quebec, yes.