

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Stanfield: It is all very well for the Prime Minister to try to skate around the question. I should like to ask the right hon. gentleman whether we are to assume from what he has said that the opinions expressed in the book are really the opinions of the government although set forth as the personal opinions of the Secretary of State? If this is not the case, is it permissible within this government for ministers to express their personal opinions about important decisions even though those opinions may differ from those of the government?

Mr. Trudeau: The final words, of course, condition the whole question. If the opinions differ, if they are fundamentally opposed to government policy, the minister is, of course, not free to express such opinions. But that is really begging the question. I do not see there is much difference between the written and the spoken word in this regard. Ministers have made speeches on various subjects. It is my practice to try to ensure, before they are delivered, that someone checks them for content.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: Oh, oh?

PUBLICATION OF BOOK BY SECRETARY OF STATE ON
QUEBEC CRISIS—SUGGESTED ROYAL COMMISSION TO
EXAMINE FACTS

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a supplementary question to the Prime Minister. Since there appear to be serious discrepancies between statements made by the Secretary of State regarding the events of last October and the statements made by some of the ministers of the Crown at that time, and since there will continue to be controversy as to the actual facts leading up to the invoking of the War Measures Act, may I ask the Prime Minister whether he would be prepared to appoint a royal commission—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Bell: More suspense.

Mr. Douglas: —to look into all the facts and the relevant data leading up to the invocation of the War Measures Act and the passing of the Public Order (Temporary Measures) Act?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, surely this is a frivolous suggestion. If there are passages in the book which are repugnant to the principles of cabinet solidarity or the principle of the oath of office, I would be happy for anyone to point them out and it would then be the duty of the government to take action. I cannot understand the concern of the opposition that this particular minister has expressed himself in writing, whereas all the time ministers are expressing themselves verbally. I might add that there is abundant precedent for ministers in office in the United Kingdom publishing books on crises of the day while they are in office, and I cannot particularly get excited about this instance.

Mr. Douglas: The Prime Minister appears to be answering the question of the Leader of the Opposition and not the question that I asked him. Since there are serious discrepancies in the facts as alleged by the Secretary of State and other ministers of the government, would the Prime Minister be prepared to set up a royal commission so as to give the Canadian people the actual facts as to the events leading up to the invocation of the War Measures Act?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I do not in any way concede the premise that there are serious discrepancies in fact, but even if there were I would also concede that it happens from time to time that ministers take different positions on different matters. The fundamental question is whether a minister has dissociated himself from government policy on a fundamental matter or has not. My belief is that this minister has not, and this is why I suggest that the proposal for a royal commission is a frivolous one.

RESCINDING OF PUBLIC ORDER (TEMPORARY MEASURES)
ACT—OPPORTUNITY FOR DEBATE

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, may I ask a further supplementary. In view of the fact that the statements made by the minister seem to call into question the grounds upon which the government asked Parliament to enact the Public Order (Temporary Measures) Act, is the government now prepared either to rescind this act or to provide for a day's debate in Parliament when the views of the members of the House may be canvassed with respect to such action?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, both the Minister of Justice and myself have answered this question at different times. The House knows that the act expires of its own accord by the end of April unless the House wants to prolong its operation. I believe it is not the desire of the leader of the New Democratic Party to prolong its operation. Therefore there is no intention on the part of the government to provide a day's debate to discuss this question. We have said that if the act is withdrawn by proclamation the House will be seized of the fact. We have also committed ourselves to placing before parliament the whole subject of public order in cases analogous to the one which occurred last fall, and this subject matter will be brought before parliament in the near future. At that time, of course, the opposition will have an opportunity to state its policy, and the policy it would follow in cases when people are trying to destroy our democracy. We will have ample debate at that time.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PUBLICATION OF BOOK BY SECRETARY OF STATE ON
QUEBEC CRISIS

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister challenged the Leader of the Opposition to produce anything in the nature of a complete contradiction of cabinet solidarity.