

Oral Questions

duced it without prior consultation and co-operation. I will ask the minister this: why all the footdragging with respect to a meeting of the federal and provincial ministers of health in order to determine the proper approach to bring about proper funding with respect to social services? Why cannot the minister pick up the phone and organize a meeting in the very near future so that this matter can be determined, in order that what the social services people are looking for will be implemented? Why cannot that be done without the footdragging?

● (1422)

Miss Bégin: Mr. Speaker, I do not understand the foot problem of the hon. member.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: Yours is in your mouth.

Miss Bégin: As far as I am concerned, two months and one week of consultation is not enough for a new minister. Second, one province amongst others, Manitoba, had a new government. I respect that democratic process.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss Bégin: I wanted the Conservative minister of that province to have a chance to learn his dossier and be a full participant. I can go on by giving several other answers, but I have indicated the practical problems which made it impossible to have an earlier meeting than now. It is as simple as that.

Mr. Clark: Back to Carleton!

Miss Bégin: I do not recall the opposition party giving permission to this side of the House to increase any amount in the negotiations. I have said very clearly that I have to bring that message home to the provinces.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby.

Mr. Alexander: Mr. Speaker, now that everything is in place—

Some hon. Members: Order, order!

Miss Bégin: I cannot hear the hon. member.

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ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE**REASON FOR ATTEMPTING TO STOP KEABLE INQUIRY**

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Solicitor General. In announcing his support of the then announced Quebec inquiry, the Solicitor General said in the House on June 21 that Quebec, like Manitoba, New Brunswick and any other province, has a right to inquire into the administration of justice. Considering the extension of the terms of reference for the Quebec inquiry was

[Mr. Alexander.]

made three weeks ago, why is he now proposing a complete withdrawal of that right from the province of Quebec, instead of restricting the federal government's refusal to participate in certain matters only?

[Translation]

Hon. Francis Fox (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the hon. member that he read the request that I filed before the Superior Court in Montreal. He will find that it contains several conclusions and that some of them do not, of course, request a complete suspension of the Keable inquiry.

[English]

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, the minister has been considerably more forthcoming in his answers in the past by at least providing more information than he is at this time. With specific reference to the two matters that the Solicitor General has objection to—the request for the lines of authority in the RCMP and the operational procedural manual of the RCMP—does he not think an inquiry established under the terms of reference, which the minister agreed to, has to pursue to its end the matters that would be provided only by obtaining the operational manual and learning the lines of authority in the RCMP?

[Translation]

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, I think my course of action on this issue was always quite clear all along these debates, both in June and now. Our position has always been that the provincial attorneys general have jurisdiction over the administration of justice and that in the course of inquiries on alleged illegal acts committed within a province, it belongs to the attorney general of the said province to investigate the matter as he sees fit.

With regard to the request submitted to the Keable inquiry, a whole page of allegations show that the Keable inquiry seems to be going beyond the mandate given to it and to be doing much more than investigating criminal acts. It is actually investigating the internal operations and the day-to-day activities of the RCMP. The questions and arguments submitted cover a period going back to 1970 until now. We are actually being asked to produce complete files on all RCMP operations in some fields. As for me, this clearly exceeds an inquiry into specific illegal acts which were brought to the attention of the Keable Commission by the Quebec attorney general.

● (1427)

[English]

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, in the House on June 17 last when the minister was giving his wholehearted endorsement to the establishment of the commission he listed four matters into which there would be an inquiry and among them is included item C, disposal of documents that were seized at the time. I want to repeat part of the question and hope to get a more specific answer from the minister. If he agreed in principle that the government of Quebec has jurisdictional authority to make such an inquiry into criminal acts, and even the extended