

*Inquiries of the Ministry*WAR MEASURES ACT—ARRESTS, RELEASES, CONTINUING
DETENTIONS AND CHARGES

Hon. G. J. McIlraith (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, as the matter of arrests in Quebec is before the House may I give the House information on the latest statistics, which I think will be of interest. The total number arrested is 454. The total number released to date is 403. Of the remainder of 51, two have been sentenced by the courts, 48 have been charged with various offences and their cases are before the courts, and one person is being detained who has not yet been charged. That person was arrested earlier this week and the matter of whether to charge him or not was being considered last night. I do not know the result.

Mr. R. Gordon L. Fairweather (Fundy-Royal): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question to ask as a result of the minister's supplementary information. Has he had the opportunity to check out the question that I asked first of the Minister of Justice and second of the Solicitor General about the number of people among the 403 who have been released who might have lost their jobs solely as the result of the original apprehension?

Mr. McIlraith: No, Mr. Speaker, I have not been able to obtain that information yet.

WAR MEASURES ACT—REQUEST FOR STATEMENT ON
TREATMENT OF PERSONS HELD IN JAIL

Mr. Georges Valade (Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a supplementary question to the Solicitor General. Would he in the near future make a complete statement to the House on the treatment of persons being held in jails so that the public will be informed about these matters and about how these investigations have been conducted?

Hon. G. J. McIlraith (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, I am not quite clear as to just what the hon. member is referring to, in view of the work of the committee that has been reviewing these matters at the request of the Quebec Minister of Justice. I shall see if it is possible to gather together the information that already has been mostly given in this House on the point and add anything to it that can usefully be added.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Because of the responsibility of the federal government for bringing in the War Measures Act and because of the degree to which people are concerned about evidence that ill treatment is being handed out, does the minister receive reports from day to day from this committee appointed by the government of the province of Quebec dealing with specific cases?

Mr. McIlraith: Mr. Speaker, the right hon. gentleman started his question by saying, "Because of the federal government having enacted the measure—"

Mr. Diefenbaker: No. It has not enacted it yet; not the new measure.

[Mr. McIlraith.]

Mr. McIlraith: Well, he referred to action taken under an Act of the federal Parliament. The position of any person under that Act is exactly the same, of course, as that of any person arrested under the Criminal Code. It is a federal statute and the responsibility—and I wish to repeat this—the primary responsibility for its administration remains and must remain with the provincial authorities. The right hon. member spoke about information on a day to day basis. I do not think it is fair to say that it is given on a day to day basis. Nevertheless, we have a very close working relationship and do obtain information regularly throughout the period involved.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, now that the minister has admitted that the government does obtain information concerning the allegations being made, will he tell the House whether or not the allegations of cruelty and inhumane treatment in specific cases have been looked into and whether the government of Canada thinks there is no justification for so doing on the basis of the information which the government has received from or on behalf of the committee?

Mr. McIlraith: No, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I was not sufficiently clear a moment ago. The allegation of inhumane treatment, or whatever term the right hon. gentleman used, was in evidence given in an open Quebec court. It was the evidence of one witness and was not, so far as I know, countered; nor was an opportunity given to deal with that evidence by way of rebuttal or otherwise. Consequently I am not in a position to say whether the allegations have any substance in them or not. The investigation of that matter is going on under the responsibility of and is being conducted by the proper authorities of the government of the province concerned.

Mr. Fairweather: But the minister is privy to that information.

Mr. McIlraith: Mr. Speaker, I have no responsibility in relation to that investigation that is going on and do not have detailed information on it. I assume that we will be able to obtain what information can properly be given at the conclusion of the report dealing with what the investigation has disclosed.

Mr. Baldwin: The minister is washing his hands of the matter.

Mr. Diefenbaker: What does the minister mean by "give such information as may be properly furnished"? This government must be responsible particularly for any inhumanity and should certainly see to it that a full investigation takes place. Does the minister not agree with that?

Mr. McIlraith: No, the minister does not agree with the right hon. gentleman's constant attempts to place the federal government in the position of interfering in areas which are the responsibility of the provincial government.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!