

Oral Questions

Mr. Trudeau: I am sorry. I am not as bright as the hon. lady from Kingston.

Some hon. Members: D'accord.

An hon. Member: Not as bright as Goyer.

Mr. Trudeau: The hon. member for Halifax has quoted himself as enunciating some doctrine that the Solicitor General should be informed of every aspect of security. He says no. Would he read it again? We will take time to hear it.

An hon. Member: You are not the Speaker.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I will read it slowly for the Prime Minister.

An hon. Member: You could not read it fast anyhow.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, the Solicitor General was quoting a comment I made at the time the Mackenzie report was tabled in the House. Following a statement the Solicitor General quoted this, with approval:

I am sure that members of parliament accept the necessity that much of the security operation is conducted outside our purview.

That is, members of parliament, Mr. Speaker.

What would be cause for grave concern would be any thought that much of the operation is beyond the ken of the ministry or the Prime Minister; that there are not ministers, elective and responsible members of government to whom the entire security operation is an open book, who have continuing access to everything that is going on in that area, and who give proper, responsible, political, civilian direction to the operation on a continuing basis.

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the continuing direction is obviously part of our doctrine and our policy. I have repeated earlier that that continuing direction was incorporated in its last form in the directives of March, 1975, so obviously we should believe in continuing direction by the civilian side of the security services, as indeed in any other arm of government.

I am a little bit dubious of the context in which the hon. member says that the operations should be an open book, if I am quoting him correctly. If he means the day-to-day operations—the hon. member for Halifax shakes his head, no. Then we do agree. If he means that all the RCMP know and what is in all their files—if the implication was that we should know about it, in other words, that we should know all the secrets about this country that the RCMP knows, then our answer to that is, that is not our policy. It does exist in some countries but it is not our policy.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: We in this government, and I believe it was the case with previous governments, have removed ourselves from the day-to-day operations of the security services. Indeed, we have done it from the operations of the police on the criminal side. We just make sure that the general directives are those which issue from the government and the example of that kind of directive was given in the guidelines of March, 1975.

[Miss MacDonald.]

Mr. Stanfield: A final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Does the Prime Minister not agree that this doctrine, approved by the Solicitor General of the day, certainly included the scope of security operations? Will the Prime Minister not agree that the failure of the government to check whether, in carrying out the mandate given to the security operations by the government whether or not they were investigating a democratic political party, was a breach of this responsibility and was a tremendous disaster for confederation?

Mr. Trudeau: Of course, Mr. Speaker, the "scope and mandate"—the words used by the hon. member for Halifax—should be under the purview of the government of the day. Indeed, this was the purpose of these security briefings of which I was a member and which other ministers and I attended. In that sense the mandate, the scope, the areas that the police were looking into to protect the security of the country, were all of concern to us and indeed of periodic reporting and discussion with us by the security services. I repeat, we did not know every day-to-day operation.

An hon. Member: You did not care to know.

Mr. Trudeau: We did hear at one point that they were investigating a democratic party. As soon as we heard it we asked them to stop that. That seems perfectly straightforward. What seems to have caught the imagination of the House is the fact that a political party was under surveillance by the security services.

An hon. Member: More than that; a criminal act.

Mr. Trudeau: Also, that this surveillance was exercised by way of criminal action—alleged criminal action. Mr. Speaker, to these two points we have responded; in the case of the alleged criminal action, by referring the matter to the Attorney General of the province where the act was committed and as regards the surveillance of a political party, by asking that it be stopped. What could be more clear or definite than that?

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PRIVILEGE

MR. CLARK—BRIEFINGS OF SECURITY COMMITTEE OF PRIVY COUNCIL

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege simply to allow the Prime Minister the opportunity to correct a false impression which he gave, I am sure most inadvertently. He had been referring to regular briefings of the security committee of the Privy Council, of which he is the chairman, by the security services to the government of Canada. He had referred quite explicitly to those briefings, and he said in reference to the offer that he made to me that I had been invited to take part in those briefings. I am sure the Prime Minister will agree that is not the nature of the offer that was extended to me as Leader of