

Oral Questions

tremendous admiration, that will open mail in order to protect the recipients, I am all for it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Diefenbaker: My question arises out of the controversy as to the contents of the 30 pages of evidence which the Prime Minister suggested we should read. That is very costly matter today. In my day, 30 pages of transcript could have been produced for possibly \$15. I am now told they would cost hundreds of dollars. My simple suggestion is that those 30 pages be tabled in the House, so that each of us can read the transcript and determine for ourselves the nature of the evidence given.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am informed that this whole matter was discussed in an in camera session of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs. In order to save the expense about which the right hon. member is so worried, perhaps we should ask the members of that committee to refer back to the minutes of that in camera session.

In so far as the position of the right hon. member regarding the opening of mail is concerned, I think he is taking a very sensible and logical position. He was prime minister of this country for some six years. He said he knew everything which went on through actions of the RCMP. Therefore, he was obviously aware that mail was being opened by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in the period he was prime minister. He sees nothing wrong with it. I just ask his own party to have a little huddle with the right hon. member before they take the position of the leader of the NDP.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The clock now shows five o'clock. As hon. members will realize, the question period began at twenty minutes past the hour. The most sensible arrangement would seem to me to continue questions until five minutes past five, and then go on to routine proceedings. If routine proceedings do not prove to be too lengthy, we could delay the commencement of private members' hour accordingly and extend it into the supper hour. Is that agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Paproski: It is so agreed, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It is so ordered.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, with regard to the Prime Minister's answer referring to the 30 pages of evidence, if I were given to be suspicious, I would wonder what he was covering up. I simply want to see those 30 pages. The government has them. They were not discussed in the committee at any time. Why not just produce them, because it would clarify the situation? If the Prime Minister is borne out in his interpretation of what those 30 pages contain, everything will

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

be cleared away. Just produce the 30 pages and we will know who is hiding what, and why.

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the testimony in front of the royal commission was obviously public; it was reported upon by the media. It was on the basis of that report that I suggested the opposition was asking the wrong questions. What I said was in camera—

An hon. Member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: I say to the interrupter from the Tory party that it had to do with the proceedings in front of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs. We will ask the McDonald commission if this testimony can be transcribed. If so, expense apart, I am sure the government will have no hesitation in letting anyone in the country see copies of it. However, it is, once again, indicating that we will be engaging ourselves in judging the credibility of witnesses in front of a royal commission.

● (1702)

McDONALD INQUIRY—POSITION OF GOVERNMENT ON ANSWERING QUESTIONS BEFORE REPORT HANDED DOWN

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. It goes back to some of the earlier questions which have been answered in the House. I want to be clear as to the policy of the government. Is it the policy of the Prime Minister, in the event of an inconsistency relating to the activities of ministers, or any other kind of inconsistency—an inconsistency as between testimony before the commission and statements in this House, or evidence otherwise becoming available—that the true facts should be hidden from the House of Commons until the royal commission reports? Is that the position the Prime Minister is taking?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): No, Mr. Speaker. If there is an inconsistency in the testimony, of course it will not be hidden. It will be in the testimony. The hon. gentleman has only to look at it and he will be able to make up his own mind as to whether it is inconsistent or not. What I am saying is that the ultimate decision as to whether a witness is credible or not should be left to the royal commission.

The former solicitor general, the Minister of Supply and Services, in a statement on privilege made to the House, made a position quite clear. I took the hon. gentleman at his word. If something comes out through other witnesses which tends to contradict that statement, the Leader of the Opposition will make up his mind which of the two witnesses is credible; we will make up our minds as to which is credible. All I am saying is that in the last resort we will not trust the judgment of the opposition, and they will not trust ours. We should trust the royal commission of inquiry, and that is the position taken by the Solicitor General.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: This is an important question for parliament. The Prime Minister is saying that when evidence becomes