

there are any changes needed in the law to accomplish this purpose of effective police protection of our society and ourselves, they should only be undertaken after the most careful and deliberate discussion and debate in parliament, and only after the most careful and deliberate designing of the proper safeguards and checks to assure that our individual liberties and freedoms are in fact protected. That is the position of this government, and any attempt by the NDP and others to say we have some other purpose or some other policy other than that the people must, and should, obey the law is an attempt to mislead the public, and again, as in this debate by the opposition, to manipulate the public and public opinion.

The resolution talks of the responsibility of ministers and the whole concept of ministerial responsibilities. I suggest that the position of the official opposition, if implemented, would mean that members of the government would be interfering in the day to day operations and investigations—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Is the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Fraser) rising on a question of privilege?

Mr. Fraser: I wonder if the minister, on the very point he was raising, would permit a question.

Mr. Basford: No, Mr. Speaker. I have had so many interruptions I will do that at the end of my time, if I have any time left.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Your time is coming quickly.

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, under the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and under the policies of the government we have given the RCMP, particularly the security service, a very carefully spelled-out mandate, including the direction to operate under and within the law. This afternoon my colleague, the Solicitor General, outlined a whole series of steps that had been taken over the years to assure that that was done in terms of ministerial responsibility. It is surely the responsibility of ministers and of government to set out or to provide a policy framework for the operation of police forces; but it is to leave, however, the actual day to day operation of the force—and that is of any police force—to the head of the police force itself.

We have had some quotations on ministerial responsibility in this House, many of them learned. Surely it is fundamental to the British system, the Canadian system and all other systems in the Commonwealth that those ministers responsible to parliament for police forces do not interfere in the day to day—

An hon. Member: Nobody ever asked them to. You are misleading.

Mr. Basford:—that they do not intervene in the day to day investigations.

Security

Mr. Fraser: Point to a single place where we have advocated that.

Mr. Basford: The right hon. gentleman, the hon. member for Prince Albert, has come from his province and said that people are watching television and are saying we are not allowing people to speak properly in this House and are not allowing members opposite to ask questions. I have been out in my own province, and people there are equally angry at the opposition for never allowing ministers to make any sort of statement without heckling, yelling and caterwauling from the opposite side. Let me read, for example, from a judgment of the Master of the Rolls, Metropolitan Police Commissioner, *ex parte* Blackburn, as follows:

No minister of the Crown can tell him that he must, or must not, keep observation on this place or that; or that he must, or must not, prosecute this man or that one. Nor can any police authority tell him so. The responsibility for law enforcement lies on him. He is answerable to the law and to the law alone.

That is in reference to the constable. If we were to follow the suggestions of the official opposition or their policies, we would have the government and government ministers interfering in the day to day operations of a police force—

Mr. Fraser: You are not telling the truth.

Mr. Basford: That is a policy that President Nixon seemed to believe in, but it is not a policy in which we believe.

An hon. Member: You and Nixon would run well in harness.

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, we had allegations, through evidence in a court case, of some wrongdoing by a member of the RCMP. Recognizing our responsibilities which were set out by the Solicitor General, in late May and late June of this year officers of the Solicitor General's Department and mine interviewed people both here in Ottawa and in Montreal and it came to light, through those interviews, that there were two incidents of alleged illegality in Montreal, namely, the arson incident and the incident involving dynamite.

As a result of those disclosures, officers of the Minister of Justice and of the Solicitor General inquired of the then commissioner regarding an explanation. The then commissioner could not receive explanations that were satisfactory to him, and at that point he requested the government to appoint a royal commission into the investigative procedures of the RCMP. That kind of action has been described on the other side as a cover-up. It seems to me it is the exact opposite of cover-up to send officers of the government from here to Montreal to investigate and take statements from witnesses, returning them to Ottawa, and, when not having satisfactory explanations of the statements, setting up a royal commission to investigate.

Surely that is ministerial responsibility, and there is not a textbook in this country or in the British Commonwealth that would suggest that is not acting in accordance with ministerial responsibility. The ministers and the government did what they were responsible for doing—setting out a mandate to the security service and the police force. When there were allega-