

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, October 22, 1969

The house met at 2 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

[Translation]

Twenty-sixth report of Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs—Mr. Gaston Clermont (Gatineau).

[English]

Fourth report of Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs—Mr. Francis.

[Translation]

Thirteenth and fourteenth report of Standing Committee on Transport and Communications, in French and English—Mr. H.-Pit Lesard (LaSalle).

[English]

Third report of Special Committee on Statutory Instruments—Mr. MacGuigan.

[Editor's Note: For text of above reports see today's Votes and Proceedings.]

[Translation]

COMPANY OF YOUNG CANADIANS

STATEMENT ON ACTIVITIES

Hon. Gérard Pelletier (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, during the past two weeks there have been numerous allegations concerning some persons associated with the Company of Young Canadians.

According to the act adopted by parliament in 1966, the basic objective of the Company of Young Canadians is to support, encourage and organize programs for social and economic community development in Canada through voluntary service. The Company may engage in community development work, in urban and rural areas in Canada, and it may organize programs designed primarily to widen the

social and economic opportunities of Canadians. The result is that inevitably the Company of Young Canadians works with urban renewal, rural poverty, and other less privileged groups of society.

Because of the nature of these activities, the government must expect to receive from time to time requests for investigation of alleged indiscretions committed by volunteer members of the Company of Young Canadians.

The most recent requests have been disturbing. Allegations of criminal activities which are substantiated should be dealt with before the courts in the normal manner.

However, usually responsible sources, without producing evidence, have alleged the utilization of the Company of Young Canadians to cover the furtherance of subversive activities. If these allegations are accurate, the Government stands ready to recommend to parliament necessary action, either by way of amendment to the act or establishment of a trusteeship to oversee the activities of the Company. If, on the other hand, these allegations are not substantiated, it will be necessary to reaffirm the good name of the Company of Young Canadians.

This house unanimously established the Company of Young Canadians as an organization which is uniquely independent. Ten of the fifteen members of its governing council are elected by the volunteers. The Company is not an agency of the Crown or in any way subject to direction by the government or any minister.

Parliament insisted upon this degree of independence. Therefore it would appear appropriate that any fundamental review of the Company's activities be undertaken by this house.

[English]

For the aforesaid reasons, Mr. Speaker, the government proposes that this whole matter be examined by a committee of the House.

• (2:10 p.m.)

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, since I have suggested that at least a committee of the house should be established in order to inquire into the charges made, I must welcome the change