

Oral Questions

INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN TO RCMP FOLLOWING INVOKING OF WAR MEASURES ACT

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, since the Solicitor General will not, or cannot, answer my question, I ask the Prime Minister whether he is now prepared to tell the House quite frankly, either by tabling or by some other method, precisely what instructions were given to the RCMP following the invocation of the War Measures Act to which reference was made in the House some time ago by the Prime Minister.

Will the Prime Minister now give the House this information, so as to remove the suspicion that in fact the instructions issued by the RCM Police were, at least partially, the result of instructions given to the RCM Police by the Prime Minister and by the government?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, on the latter part of the question, I would have to find out when the RCMP gave the instructions that the hon. member is talking about. My impression is that they have existed for a long period of time and that they did not begin around 1970 or 1971. But I could ascertain the exact date if, indeed, I can get it exactly from the RCMP. I can get a general answer.

In so far as the first part of the question is concerned, I repeat in the House now as clearly as I did the last time, that this instruction was given by the government, notably at meetings of the cabinet committee on security and intelligence when we were somewhat distressed that after the events of October, 1970, the police did not have more files on people who had been involved in bombings, kidnappings, killings, raiding of arsenals, and so on. We asked them to increase their security operations also in the area of internal subversion and not to concentrate, as appeared to be the case, mainly on external security. This was the general nature of the instructions. The police then abided by these instructions to the best of their ability.

REQUEST FOR TABLING OF INSTRUCTIONS TO RCMP

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has indicated the general nature of those instructions. Would he now undertake to the House of Commons to table those instructions in their entirety?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I repeat, the instructions were given at a cabinet committee on security and intelligence, and probably in the course of discussions among myself, other ministers and the commissioner of the RCMP. There are no instructions to table: I talked to the commissioner as I talk to the House now, as I think any reasonable member on the other side would say.

We were worried that there could have been activity by the FLQ over a period of years, and when it culminates in kidnappings and even the murder of a minister—"You do not seem to have many files on these people." You become concerned and ask that the security forces make sure they investigate this side more thoroughly and not only look at external

[Mr. Blais.]

subversion. There is nothing to table. I talked in those words, or words like them, and I make that quite clear before the House.

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister will understand that most of us would assume there would be some record kept, either in the form of minutes, notations made internally by security officers to whom the instructions were given, or in the form of an aide memoire that the Prime Minister might have prepared for himself.

Will he give us an undertaking now that he will have a very thorough search made for any record of any of these instructions, and that all such records will be tabled in the House of Commons?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition knows that a record is kept of cabinet committee discussions. Therefore, in the sense that what I have told the House now was told by me to the ministers and the members of the RCMP, there is probably a record of that. It is called either a record of decision, or minutes of a cabinet meeting. Certainly, it is not the intention of the government to table minutes of cabinet discussions. I am surprised that the Leader of the Opposition would suggest that the secrecy of cabinet be unveiled in order that the Canadian public and the opposition know the discussion which goes on in cabinet. That is completely contrary to the cabinet system of cabinet solidarity.

Mr. Clark: We have had a number of events, Mr. Speaker, come to light in the last couple of days that are completely contrary to the formal practices of the parliamentary system.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: These have raised very real concerns about the extent of ministerial direction to the security service and the degree to which there was ministerial or prime ministerial involvement in some of the activities that are now of concern to the House and the country.

In light of the fact that already there have been unusual events, I wonder if the Prime Minister would give the most serious consideration to—admittedly, it is an unusual action—making available a partial list. In other words, would he make available to the House of Commons and the people of Canada, to end all this mystery, those portions of cabinet minutes and, I emphasize, any other documents which might relate to instructions given by the Prime Minister, or people acting on his behalf, to security officials?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition prefaced his question by talking about unparliamentary practices. It seems to me one of them is that suggested by his side, that they will fire all the deputy ministers if ever they form a government.

If the Leader of the Opposition will reflect on the nature of cabinet government—

Mr. Stanfield: You must be in trouble.