

*Supply—Justice*

The government stands in complete confusion, after weeks of resisting the demands of the opposition in justification of their position on the Spencer case. Then the Prime Minister chooses to capitulate completely, and in so doing has completely pulled the rug out from under the ministers who have, in making the case, ably carried out the argument of the government. At this point the words that the hon. leader of the official opposition has spoken, while they were hard, do present the actual situation in which we find ourselves.

• (5:30 p.m.)

I find that my sympathies in this situation rest with the three ministers who spoke last Friday and to whom reference has already been made. Certainly the case for the government's position prior to five o'clock last Friday was well presented by these men. In fact I am personally grateful to the hon. Solicitor General for his brevity in explaining the situation as he saw it. Certainly his contribution was most helpful, as was that of the hon. minister of manpower. These ministers, having done this, the picture changed completely because the Prime Minister chose to capitulate to the requests of the opposition. Even the hon. Minister of Justice presented a fairly clear case, which indicated that part of his argument was sound and well taken. If he had not lost his temper in the heat of debate, his position would have been stronger.

Today we find the government almost like a ship in a storm without a rudder. I believe that the general public of Canada are confused as they see the situation. I am not speaking as a lawyer because I am not a member of that profession. I must look at this situation through the eyes with which I believe most Canadian laymen see the situation. It makes one wonder just what is taking place within the ranks of the government at this time.

After all, Mr. Chairman, we have here a man, who, on his own confession, is a Communist collaborator, sympathizer, spy, or call him whatever you wish. He has not been charged with this offence by any member of the government. This is on his own confession. He does not even mind coming before the people of Canada and admitting it on a television program, as he did last night.

This is not a new case. It has been dealt with by four successive Ministers of Justice; first by the hon. member for Kamloops, who last Friday made a very worthwhile temperate and reasonable presentation in the house

[Mr. Thompson.]

of the case as he saw it; and by his successor Hon. Donald Fleming. The President of the Privy Council dealt with it when he was Minister of Justice and now the present Minister of Justice has taken charge of the case. He has been assisted by the Solicitor General since his new duties project him into a case such as that involving Mr. Spencer. In addition, Mr. Chairman, two commissioners of the R.C.M.P. have dealt with this case, Commissioner Harvison and Commissioner McClellan.

For the Prime Minister to take the stand that he has taken, in view of this, even in the face of the demands of the opposition, is something which I say verges on the ridiculous. Then, Mr. Chairman, the record of the previous Conservative government is such that if they had had this case to handle today, they would not have dealt with it in a way too much different from the way it was handled prior to last Friday.

Therefore we find a situation that is not only critical, but it is one to which we must return with a reasonable sense of responsibility in order that we may go on with the business of the house. I believe that the Spencer case is an example of bumbling by the government. We do not share the concern of the other opposition parties that there has been any attempt in this case to hide corruption or skulduggery behind the scenes. As far as we can see, even the words of Mr. Spencer himself, seem to deny this. Thus, we do not consider an inquiry into the firing procedures of Mr. Spencer to be anything but a minute part of the kind of investigation that has been previously demanded, unless we can be assured that the government will now investigate the whole area of crime, not only of crime but of subversion within this country; the impact of international crime and, yes, the question of corruption.

Unless this is done, Mr. Chairman, I do not see how the public of Canada will ever be satisfied or have any assurance that what is being done is the right thing. So, it would seem that it has become evident that in agreeing to this inquiry, the government have forced themselves into a corner where they will have to agree to the setting up of a commission to investigate crime in this country as it relates to every facet of those things that we read and hear about continually through our news media. It is not that we blame the government for the fact that there is crime in Canada. It is not that we blame