

Organized Crime

inquiry. After weighing, as we must, what has to be done for the benefit of the whole of society, and particularly for the benefit of hundreds of thousands of poor victims out there, we have come down in favour of a royal commission. A royal commission could take the public into its confidence. It could make the ordinary person on the street understand that the policeman is his friend, that law enforcement agencies are his friends, that he does not need to be pushed around by organized crime and the mafia, and that he can use the forces of law and order for protection.

We need a royal commission to bring about a change in public attitude. That is why I plead with the Solicitor General not to reject this proposal. He should not reject it just because it is an opposition proposal or because it may look as though he caved in to the opposition. I do not think there is anyone on this side of the House who would not congratulate the Solicitor General and the Minister of Justice for adopting this proposal and making it their own.

Mr. MacKay: We would applaud them.

Mr. Leggatt: The House has been indulgent. I have taken a fair amount of time. I could go into much more detail, and perhaps I will at another time. However, I want to tell the Solicitor General, the Minister of Justice, and the Minister of Manpower and Immigration that any information I have, they can have. We are certainly willing to co-operate in any way we can to see that vice is stamped out.

[Translation]

Hon. Francis Fox (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, I wish to take this opportunity to make a few comments on organized crime in Canada, and particularly on certain initiatives taken by the federal government to control and fight this problem. It goes without saying, Mr. Speaker, that if this were only a political matter, I would be the first to comply with the request of the hon. member opposite for because even if, politically speaking, it is not the most efficient way to control organized crime, it would be in my own interest to support his proposition. In fact, Mr. Speaker, if I do not support the proposition of the hon. member, it is because we have extremely serious reasons not to do so.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, much has been said and written about organized crime, and while it has been romanticized by some and deplored by commentators in the media and others, it is indeed a complex problem which requires a sophisticated response. There are, of course, different suggestions about the approach which should be adopted to deal with the problem of organized crime. The suggestion is made today that a royal commission of inquiry or some other type of public inquiry would expose organized crime, but at the same time it would also expose everything the police know about organized crime and thereby hamper police investigations.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: Nonsense.

[Mr. Leggatt.]

Mr. Peters: Be reasonable.

Mr. Fox: An alternative approach would be to try to assist the police in their efforts to organize and equip themselves to deal with this cancer which strikes at the very heart of our society. The question of a crime probe is one I have examined very closely and discussed in detail with the RCMP. I am sure hon. members opposite will agree that the RCMP has a great deal of experience in combatting organized crime.

Mr. Hogan: They tried it in the United States and it was successful.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. The Solicitor General (Mr. Fox) has the floor, and I suggest that hon. members listen.

Mr. Fox: The very considered advice of the RCMP is that it would not be a good way of combatting organized crime. I am always impressed by the great depth of knowledge hon. members opposite have about the practices and procedures in other countries. I must say that they do not seem to be aware of the type of response that has been going on in this country since the mid-fifties. In the course of my remarks this afternoon I will try to bring them up to date.

However, first I would like to take this opportunity to make a few comments on the recent CBC television program on organized crime. While the efforts of the producers have, of course, heightened the awareness of many Canadians and served to inform many others, their methods, including serious insinuations and innuendoes, have left much to be desired. It has been acknowledged that it took 2½ years to produce three hours of television air time. It took 2½ years to put together film footage on cases which are already well documented. The so-called "French connection", for instance, has already been the subject of a book and two movies. That connection was undone as a result of international police co-operation.

Mr. Peters: Not one of them is in jail.

Mr. Fox: The hon. member's facts are wrong. Most of the people involved in Montreal are, or have been, in jail.

Mr. Peters: They are walking the streets.

Mr. Fox: The case of the Dubois brothers was well publicized as a result of the work of the Quebec commission into organized crime, and the work of the anti-corruption squad of the Hong Kong police has been covered by the media. The cases of Vic Cotroni and Paolo Violi are matters of public record and have received considerable media coverage in the past.

I do not make these remarks in a critical sense. I use them only by way of illustration. It took 2½ years to prepare a three-hour television program based in large part on material which is in the public forum. It is well documented and need not withstand cross-examination or scrutiny by the courts. On the other hand, police investigators must develop information, collect evidence and locate witnesses who will prove guilt