

Private Members' Business

Meanwhile, earlier in November the famous Montreal five: Lemieux, Vallières, Gagnon, Chartrand and Larue-Langlois, were charged with seditious conspiracy and membership in the FLQ. On December 3 Mr. Cross was freed. Finally in January the troops were removed.

I would like to run that measure of events against my own memory of the incidents. In 1964 I was a staff officer at the headquarters of the eastern Quebec area when the Queen was about to visit. The FLQ at that time was making a lot of noise. In fact, the Queen's life was threatened. The general officer command in Quebec command at that time went to Quebec City and talked to me, among others, asking if the Queen's visit should be cancelled. My counsel to that general at the time was that we should not because we did not know the extent of the FLQ presence. Surely this would be taking too reactionary a step against an enemy that was supposedly very small and turned out to be quite small. I think the counsel was correct at the time. It was saying, do not over-react.

In 1970 I found myself as the commanding officer of the Cinquième battalion de services à Valcartier. I was living through all of these events. I was kept fairly busy because I was first of all told to provide some of my troops to help the infantry. I had to establish an advance base in Montreal and take part in the security of base Valcartier.

My personal conclusion from all of these events was that the invocation of the War Measures Act was not justified. The same conclusion can be reached by others. If we look at the "Queen's Quarterly" the Commissioner of the RCMP at the time, William Higgitt, was even more blunt.

• (1140)

He made it clear that he had never been asked for his opinion on the efficacy of invoking the act but only on the mechanics of implementing it. He added that if it conferred certain advantages to the police, there were many disadvantages, not the least of which were the excessive powers granted the Quebec police and the misuse of these powers that went on unchecked.

The commission pressed for documentation of the apprehended insurrection. Higgitt said that there was none. He went further to insist that he would have stopped somewhat short of using the words "rebellion" or "open rebellion". I had greater faith in the people concerned than that.

From all these things I would conclude that the Liberal government of 1970 was a bit like the Liberal government of today. It could see this thing coming but failed to act, or it deliberately invoked the War Measures Act for political purposes.

I can see the current Liberal government acting in the same way. Look at the dock strikes. Look at the stevedore strike, the

railway strike. It is either too little, too late or it is just the opposite, a total over-reaction. As one critic said at the time, it is like cracking a peanut with a sledgehammer.

My conclusion on this motion is that the problem in Quebec was with the Quebec forces as much as with the federal forces. As we have seen, all the Quebec police forces; the QPP, the Montreal city police and the RCMP were all involved in this.

In my judgment, the Bloc Québécois is not wrong in making this motion. I cannot go along with it but it is not wrong. It is being used as a warning of what can happen in a democratic country such as ours. At the same time, nothing can excuse the crimes that were committed nor is the Bloc trying to excuse them. Crimes were committed by the FLQ and nothing can excuse that.

In my view the government of today is not in a position to make an apology nor should it make financial compensation. Undoubtedly there were some innocent victims in all of this but we cannot prove it today. It would be of no value to try to bring it all to light again and find out who was innocent and who was not. The blame should be shared around. But I cannot condemn the Bloc Québécois for bringing the motion up today. Let it act as a warning of what can happen in a democratic society.

[Translation]

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my Reform colleague for his good judgment and honest approach. As for the hon. member for Nickel Belt, once more he did what the federalists have always wanted done when dealing with Quebec, that is getting a French Canadian to use strong arm tactics against other French Canadians.

I am pleased to rise on this motion, introduced by my friend and colleague, the hon. member for Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead. In 1970, I was 24, I was married and the father of a young child, therefore old enough to appreciate what was going on in Canada at the time.

Young Quebecers, troubled by inequalities, injustices and the lack of opportunities in Canadian businesses, had joined in the fight against the injustices suffered by the Quebec people. They used means which we still disapprove of and which were definitely wrong.

The Prime Minister of the time, Mr. Pierre Elliott Trudeau, was in the third year of his mandate and he decided, after several cabinet meetings, to put Quebec back in its place. Several Quebec ministers sat in on those cabinet meetings, including, to name just a few, the present Prime Minister, then Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development; Mr. Jean-Luc Pepin, Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce; Mr. Gérard Pelletier, Secretary of State and Jean Marchand, people who used to be called, in Quebec, the three doves, but whose hearts were