

*Supply—Solicitor General*

● (9:00 p.m.)

I wish to say a few words about the officers and members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I am informed that the commissioner is to retire at an early date to accept a position as parliamentary commissioner or ombudsman for the province of Alberta. This is pioneer legislation for Canada. I am sure the administration of this legislation will be followed closely by members of parliament and of provincial legislatures and by all who are interested in protecting the rights of the citizen in our increasingly complicated society. I am sure that his lengthy experience in the R.C.M.P. and his understanding of, shall I say, both sides of the coin so far as the administration of the law is concerned will stand him in good stead. This is a new position and presents the commissioner with a great opportunity for service to the public advantage. I am sure that everybody will watch the administration of this legislation with interest. I, with many others I am sure, join in wishing him continued good health and every success in all he undertakes to protect the rights of the Canadian people.

I wish to say a word or two about law enforcement officers. Unquestionably our law enforcement officers today have an increasingly difficult role. We live in an entirely different world from the one that many of us were brought up in. Many of the complications in our society today we were unaware of in our youth, or we thought that they did not exist. I must say at this point that I agree with the remarks of the leader of the official opposition when he referred to the histories of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. To some extent, I also agree with his contentions, that the public's image of the force and its appreciation of the force has declined owing to the requirement that the force spend a good deal of time in dealing with traffic violations. I think there is some validity to that contention. Those duties have affected the image of the force—particularly its image with younger people, though other persons have also expressed that view.

On a number of occasions in recent years I have noticed the growing inhumanity of man to man. Not long ago I was crossing an intersection in this city when a bus driver was driving through on the light. He had the right of way. No passenger was in the bus. Four men under the influence of liquor drove in front of this bus, and the bus driver dented their car in and pushed it along the tracks.

[Mr. Herridge.]

Possibly a dozen people who were on the corners at the time of the accident all disappeared. I then heard the men getting out of the car and saying that they were going to charge the bus driver with crossing against the light. I heard this going on, went over to the group and listened to the conversation for a minute or so. The men said they would lay a charge as soon as they could find a policeman. I then said to the bus driver: "If you want a defence, here is my card. I am willing to go into court and say what actually happened, because I saw it." As soon as I said that, the men got back into their car and drove off.

Members of the R.C.M.P., as all of us are, are human—Mr. Chairman, I am not actually a saint, although many people think I am—and therefore they make mistakes. From my experience, any complaints that I made to a senior officer or detachment head were immediately investigated, and where action was required to remedy the complaint, action was taken.

Less than six weeks ago a man dropped dead outside the entrance to the east block. Everybody hurried by. The man who was with him when he dropped appealed to those around him for help to carry the afflicted man. It was not known then that the man was dead. An appeal was made to help carry the man to the Chateau Laurier. In the end the friend had to leave the afflicted man lying on the sidewalk, go down to the Chateau and get some employees to help carry the man down to the Chateau. A situation of this kind is incredible; yet that sort of thing happens in the society in which we live. It would never have happened a few years ago. These incidents show the influences that are brought to bear on our young people. To some extent we are all guilty of the circumstances under which we live today.

In that connection may I conclude by reading a paragraph or two from an article headed "Let's Face It". It is a commentary by Barbara W. Tuchman, and has a further heading "The Missing Element—Moral Courage":

Of all the ills that our poor criticized, analysed, sociologized society is heir to, the focal one, it seems to me, from which so much of our uneasiness and confusion derive, is the absence of standards. We are too unsure of ourselves to assert them, to stick by them, if necessary in the case of persons who occupy positions of authority, to impose them. We seem to be afflicted by a widespread and eroding reluctance to take any stand on any values, moral, behavioral or esthetic.

Everyone is afraid to call anything wrong, or vulgar, or fraudulent, or just bad taste or bad manners.