

SIU

investigation in order to find out if there is validity in them, and if they are valid then there is truly a mess.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I do not do this in a frivolous way, but I wonder whether Your Honour could investigate to see if there is a plot afoot by the government House leader to literally smoke us out by turning off the air-conditioning.

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SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF THE HERITAGE OF CANADA

TABLING OF STUDY OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEPARTMENT OF SECRETARY OF STATE AND SOCIETY

Hon. James Hugh Faulkner (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 41(2) I should like to table some documents which constitute a study of the relationship between the Department of the Secretary of State and the Society for the Study of the Heritage of Canada.

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LABOUR CONDITIONS

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL INVESTIGATION OF SEAFARERS' INTERNATIONAL UNION

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I would like at this time to make a statement with regard to the SIU. With the indulgence of the House, I will try to be as brief as possible but the House will recognize that this has been an important area of discussion for some months.

I would like to advise the House that I have ordered a further investigation of the Seafarers' International Union under powers conferred on me in section 196 of part V of the Canada Labour Code. This further investigation results from new material which was turned over to me by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lang) on April 29.

It is important that this investigation be viewed in its proper perspective. This requires a full knowledge of the sequence of events that transpired at both the Ontario provincial and federal levels since April, 1974, when the Metropolitan Toronto Police and the Ontario Provincial Police launched an investigation into allegations affecting the Seafarers' International Union.

The investigation in Ontario last year continued for eight months without publicity. Then, on November 19, in the Ontario legislature, the MPP for High Park, Dr. Morton Shulman, made a speech in which he alleged that violence and intimidation were rampant within the SIU, that union elections were not being held in an open and democratic way, and that many other illegal and corrupt practices occurred within that union.

As soon as I saw the press reports of Dr. Shulman's speech, I requested that he turn over to me any information or evidence he might have to substantiate his charges, which I regarded as extremely serious. Reference to my response to the Shulman allegations was made in the

[Mr. Clarke (Vancouver Quadra).]

Ontario legislature on November 22, 1974, by the Attorney General of Ontario, the Hon. Robert Welch, who said he had heard two news reports referring to my request for specific factual information from Dr. Shulman.

On the same day, November 22, criminal charges following from the eight months of police investigation into the SIU were finally laid. The Ontario authorities laid five charges, and all were related to one incident that took place in an SIU hall. Two of the charges were subsequently dropped. The remaining three charges were processed by the Ontario government under the Criminal Code, and required no federal government involvement.

When several days passed without a response from Dr. Shulman to my request for the information he claimed to have, I phoned the then Solicitor General of Ontario, the Hon. George Kerr. I asked him to provide me with any information in his possession that would support the demand he and other spokesmen of the provincial government were making for a federal royal commission or judicial inquiry into the activities of the SIU.

May I remind the House that under the constitution, as the province of Ontario is fully aware, any wrongdoing that involves violation of the Criminal Code must be handled by the government of the province in which the alleged crimes were committed. This is the only level of government that can legally take action in this kind of situation. If, however, any alleged misconduct by SIU officers was in the area of industrial relations, then, of course, it would probably come under the Canada Labour Code since the SIU operates and bargains in an industry that falls under federal jurisdiction.

It was by no means clear at that time whether the allegations and investigations covered both spheres of activity, or were confined solely to Criminal Code matters; and the Ontario authorities had been strangely unhelpful in providing clarification. I told Mr. Kerr that I would very much like to see the results of inquiries into the SIU by the police forces of Ontario as they might relate to labour-management relations, and asked him to forward this information to me as soon as possible.

I was not, however, given the kind of co-operation I had the right to expect if I was to be able to judge for myself whether any federal action was called for. The Ontario government, for reasons I can only speculate about, continued to withhold its findings from us.

Nevertheless, Mr. Kerr repeated his demands for a federal investigation into the SIU, even though he admitted he had no new information to offer as the basis for such an inquiry, nor had he forwarded to us the information he already had in his files. In a reply to opposition questions in the legislature on December 9, 1974, he stated:

As far as new information is concerned, I believe what the hon. member for High Park has indicated in his remarks in this House and the information that the police have, all of which is available to the federal officials, is really the information in toto.

During this period, frequent charges and insinuations of a federal government cover-up of the SIU matter were made in the House of Commons and in the media. There was, in fact, no cover-up. We simply had no information on which to act, other than that pertaining to the alleged criminal acts, which came strictly under provincial responsibility.