

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, Mr. Speaker, that is a correct interpretation of our intention. It was received only on Wednesday evening, and I sent it to the Governor General the next day. It is too soon to take a final position on the matter, but I can tell the house that what I hope will result is that we will be able to publish very substantial parts of it. I would hope that whatever expurgated version we did publish would have the certification of the commissioners themselves that they consider the deletions to be deletions that are made in the interest of national security only and for no other reason. As I say, Mr. Speaker, I should like this authority from them, but that of course will depend upon their own decision.

Mr. Lewis: A further supplementary if I may, Mr. Speaker. The point the Prime Minister alluded to is one I had in mind, and I should like to put this question to him. Do I understand that the decision as to which parts are to be omitted when the report is published will be a decision of the government rather than a decision of the commission, although the commission will be consulted about it? Is that a fair summary of the Prime Minister's statement?

Mr. Trudeau: That is a fair summary, Mr. Speaker. This is because the commissioners are taking the position—I think it is the correct one to take—that their report is a whole report and they should not be asked to abridge it themselves. The report as submitted by them is their report to the government. Therefore we will have to take the initiative in making any abridgement. We will do it, of course, in consultation with any of the officials of the commission who can help us, but we will have to take the responsibility for making these abridgements. I hope that such abridgements, as I say, will carry some kind of authorization or statement of opinion by the commissioners, that the abridgements were made only in areas that affect national security, but of course I cannot speak for them. This is what I will seek.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. As the direct responsibility for national security rests at all times primarily on the Prime Minister of the country, and in view of the fact that for six years I held the position of prime minister, as did Mr. St. Laurent from 1948 to 1957, will the expurgated portions of that report be made available

to former prime ministers as privy councillors? Otherwise, Mr. Speaker, if they are not matters may be contained therein that should be subject to challenge. No former prime minister should be in the position of having only a selective or abridged report on matters connected with security during his period of administration. I ask the Prime Minister to make available to former prime ministers those portions of the report that deal in any way with their period of the prime ministership.

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I cannot make that commitment now, not having read the report. I do not know if there are any such portions.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I do not, either.

Mr. Trudeau: I do not know if there are any such portions which would cover such a situation. I know, and of course the right hon. gentleman knows, that there are a number of precedents in the United Kingdom for not publishing reports when they affect national security. I hope it will be apparent from any authorization or approval of the abridgement I may obtain from the commissioners that no deletions such as the right hon. gentleman suggests have been made. If there is no such approval I shall perhaps look at other ways to cover the point raised by the right hon. member.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I am not in any way criticizing the necessity for portions of the report being kept secret. I am referring to possibilities which, in years to come, could have a detrimental effect against any one prime minister with respect to matters of security.

Mr. Trudeau: I understand the concern of the right hon. gentleman. His concern I think is justified, and I shall try to meet that point as best I can.

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I presume the report contains recommendations for parliament and the government. Can the Prime Minister tell us whether those portions, at any rate, will be made public?

Mr. Trudeau: In the same sense, Mr. Speaker, I cannot answer this because, not having read it, it is purely a hypothetical matter so far as I am concerned. I would hope any portions which might be concerned with parliament will be dealt with in the way I suggested any portions that are of concern to any former prime minister might be dealt with.