

Oral Questions

name which could only, in retrospect, have fitted Sir Roger at that time?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I am afraid I do not know the answer to that question. I will be happy to take it as notice and try to find out the information about which the hon. member asks.

If my recollection is exact, Mr. Gouzenko in those days referred to a mole inside the British intelligence agency MI5. Not having been present at the time, I have no recollection of whether the mole could be identified. I will be glad to find out.

RELEASE OF GOUZENKO PAPERS

Hon. Allan Lawrence (Durham-Northumberland): Madam Speaker, both within and without the government now for about three or four years as the Prime Minister is aware, there have been members in this House who have been attempting to obtain the release of the Taschereau papers, or the Gouzenko documents.

I am sure that when the Prime Minister took over the high office he did, at some time prior to 1974 he was very comprehensively briefed on the Gouzenko papers. In any event, during 1974 or right after 1974, after the British caused an investigation to be made into the activities of Sir Roger Hollis, was there not at that time a very high level communication from the then British Prime Minister to the Canadian Prime Minister about the revelations and the accusations concerning Sir Roger Hollis? Was this not really the true reason why, to this day, those Gouzenko papers have not been released to the Canadian public, and was this not really the real reason why, four years ago, an extraordinary move was taken by the Prime Minister directly to put those Gouzenko papers on ice for another ten years?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, there are several points raised by the hon. gentleman in his question. The first is that Members of Parliament have been trying for three or four years, as he says, to get release of the Taschereau papers. The hon. member was solicitor general for the Government of Canada for a period between 1979 and 1980. I am sure he has the answer to these questions if he is as interested as he says. Why did he not release the papers? I do not know what the answer is to that. Probably he did not release them either because he did not get around to examining them or because he found other reasons.

In my case, the hon. gentleman suggests, and his words are, that I was comprehensively briefed on this matter before 1974, but I do not know why the hon. member assumes that. I have no recollection of having asked questions or having received any detailed information about the Gouzenko affair. Presumably, since his interest is so great, he did that when he was solicitor general. I am sure that he has the answers to these questions, whereas I do not. Let him give the answers to the House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

REASONS FOR NON-RELEASE

Hon. Allan Lawrence (Durham-Northumberland): Madam Speaker, I am glad the Prime Minister is attempting to release me from any oath by which I may be bound. He is saying yes. I think, therefore, that the Prime Minister realizes the reason none of us in the Clark administration was able to obtain those papers was because certain aspects were bound by an undertaking given by the then prime minister to him as the ex-prime minister. It was as simple and as stark and as naked in its restriction and cover-up as that.

● (1420)

In any event, apart altogether from the fruitless attempts in, before and since those days to obtain the Gouzenko papers, now that this international story is breaking throughout the world—yesterday, today, and there will be more revelations in the British House of Commons on Thursday—I plead with the Prime Minister, no matter the degree of incompetence in Canadian and British intelligence circles those papers may show, and apart from any internal investigation he is now having, to release those papers today. What national purpose is now served by continually hiding, for almost 40 years, those documents and papers?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, even the hon. member astounds me when he makes such representations in this matter. When he alludes to this convention of not looking at papers of previous administrations, he realizes that is a convention that dates back many decades. It is a convention that presided over the transfer of Mr. St. Laurent's papers to Mr. Diefenbaker, over Mr. Diefenbaker's to Mr. Pearson, over Mr. Pearson and my administration, to Mr. Clark's, and then again from Mr. Clark to myself. The Gouzenko papers belong to another administration, not to mine and not to the Leader of the Opposition. I have no more access to them than the hon. member had when he was solicitor general.

Mr. Lawrence: You hid them for ten years.

Mr. Trudeau: Now the hon. member says I hid them for ten years. Why did he hide them for ten months? He had as much access to them as I do.

REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED ACTIVITIES OF JOHN WATKINS

Mr. Otto Jelinek (Halton): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. In view of the current inquiry in Great Britain into the activities of Sir Roger Hollis, and the growing evidence that the penetration by the U.S.S.R. into western intelligence operations was and is more extensive than previously believed, will the minister reopen an investigation into the alleged espionage activities of former Canadian ambassador to Moscow, John Watkins, in order to ascertain any possible connection with Sir Roger, or any other current connections which may have arisen as a result of those activities?