

Oral Questions

of the general policy of the RCMP. As Commissioner Higgitt testified under oath, today, the general policy was to condone not only these specific incidents but also several others. That is the clear purport of his testimony.

In view of the fact that the Prime Minister and his former solicitors general should be, if they are not, fully aware of the general policy in this area, does the Prime Minister not think, in the interest of getting all the facts, that he should testify before the McDonald commission with respect to the policy areas which were testified to this morning?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I repeat that I do not have the testimony of Commissioner Higgitt. I doubt very much that he was saying what the hon. member quotes him as saying, that there is a general policy on the part of the government to support the RCMP in its breaking of the law. If the commissioner says that, that is flatly denied by his own testimony before the Keable commission. It is flatly denied by the solicitors general under which he has served, and certainly no such conversation ever came up in my presence or with him.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS BEFORE McDONALD COMMISSION

Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is to the Prime Minister, not only in his capacity as Prime Minister but also as chairman of the cabinet committee on security matters. Can the Prime Minister tell us whether the letters, documents and memoranda referred to this morning by former Commissioner Higgitt have actually been turned over by the government to the royal commission?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have never heard of any such documents. The former solicitor general says he has no recollection of any such documents. I do not think Commissioner Higgitt has produced any such documents. The government has made all its material available to the royal commission of inquiry, and I suggest that the advice of the Minister of Justice is the best. Let the commission do its work. Let us at least have the elementary fairness not to condemn one side until we have heard the other side. This is a rule which the opposition should keep in mind once in a while.

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POST OFFICE

ACTION BY GOVERNMENT TO END STRIKE

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Minister of Justice: it has to do with the Post Office fiasco. We are now seeing the rule of law versus the rule of power with regard to the injunctions which the minister has been seeking. We find now that CUPW is not going to respect them. Police chiefs and police in general are reluctant to move. They say that perhaps there might be a breach of the peace if they did.

[Mr. Nielsen.]

The minister must be in touch with the attorneys general across the country in order to see that the situation is brought to their attention and that they move and give directions, rather than several chiefs of police. Has the minister been in touch with the attorneys general across this country in order to put the position of the government before them so that the proper action can be taken?

● (1502)

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport and Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, in cases where it is relevant, my deputies or other officials have been in touch with their counterparts in the various provinces. It is true that because we are applying the rule of the law rather than some rule of arbitrary power, the matter must necessarily take some time and some careful consideration and deliberation. That is true, but I still ask hon. members to join in the basic argument that what we must have is obedience of the law, we must have due process, no doubt moving slowly but moving inexorably just the same.

So let us not make it sound in the House as if it were some sort of confrontation between government and a particular group. This is confrontation against the law of this land itself and we will continue to apply that law slowly, carefully and properly, because in applying it—the hon. member for New Westminster says “very slowly”—very slowly, deliberately and properly, as we would in every case, we would not want in any way to be open to any feeling of disrespect of the law and the legal system which is being defied in this flagrant way.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Alexander: I am glad the minister understands the situation, because the people of Canada are looking to the House for leadership in this regard. The minister indicated he was gathering the evidence, all the facts, in order that prosecutions can be laid. Can the minister rise in his place now and tell us whether he has the facts to enable prosecutions to be laid, and what type of prosecutions he is referring to? After all, this is the second or third day that has gone by in the gathering of facts in order to prosecute. Has the minister prosecuted—and to what extent?

Mr. Trudeau: Thirsty for blood, Linc?

Mr. Lang: We have obtained injunctions in a number of locations and those injunctions have been served. We are continuing to seek injunctions in other cases in order to remove the biggest obstacle which inhibits those in the union who would want to return to work. We are, indeed, preparing the material for charges of a variety of sorts, and those will be against a variety of people involved in breaking the law.

While it would be very tempting, politically, for me to make broad statements about whom we will charge and what kind of charges those will be, I will not fall into that political trap against the obligations I have as Attorney General to, first, assess evidence carefully laid before me and, second, lay the