

*Organized Crime*

Leggatt) as well as that of the Solicitor General (Mr. Fox) and I was surprised to note that with sometimes plausible arguments the proposition has been lightly dismissed.

Mr. Speaker, due to the complexity and the importance of the matter, I do not believe that we should merely dismiss a proposal for the establishment of a royal commission on organized crime. Besides, the minister recalled that government action can be summed up in about 27 years of history, more precisely, it goes back to 1968, when various police forces started a cooperative movement to try and stamp out organized crime.

Mr. Speaker, our country is still young, but we must admit that crime is not marginal, it is organized. It is made up of men, women and young people, it is everywhere in Canada, not only in Quebec or Ontario, it is found in all provinces and in all major cities. It has its own financial means, and they are tremendous, its own leaders; in short, it is organized. Mr. Speaker, I would even say it is a parallel organization which works within the state and had tentacles gradually reaching some officials and certain departments. Of course, they have their inside quarrels. Sometimes it gives the impression of so-called political scandals, but we know it exists.

Mr. Speaker, I ask myself this question briefly but seriously to answer the motion of the New Democratic Party. We know, on the one hand, that organized crime exists in Canada, that it has its tentacles, that it is well organized and that more often than not it thwarts the police forces of the country. On the other hand, we in Quebec, particularly in Montreal, have had the experience of the Commission of Inquiry into Organized Crime, and I am tempted to say like the Solicitor General (Mr. Fox) that that commission only succeeded, in the end, in damaging the reputation of a number of simple people whose picture we saw on television. It provided money and paid judges and lawyers. It was, all in all, a source of amusement for a great many people. But if we consider the number of proceedings which were instituted as a result of this inquiry into organized crime, we can wonder to what extent such a commission can effectively fight against organized crime.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, the point of the mover was that a royal commission would cause every Canadian, every Quebecer, every Ontarian to wonder seriously about this, to increase his awareness of organized crime and to change his attitude as to the co-operation he should offer our police forces, something we are all seeking. Then, Mr. Speaker, the Solicitor General argued that a royal commission would not be effective against crime, whereas the mover emphasized that it would increase the awareness of the Canadian public, open to the public a number of files, force various police corps to come clean, in a positive sense, and review their methods. Mr. Speaker, then, I think that that argument nullifies the Solicitor General's argument, and is valid as far as we are concerned.

We have heard in the House, at least since I first came here in 1968, great speeches occasionally from solicitors general—and we have had many of them since 1968—or indeed from ministers of justice about how serious the government was in

its fight against crime. I might recall for example the famous omnibus bill, and the government proposals regarding the use of wiretapping in this country; I might also recall several questions raised in this House, and positions stated by various ministers on the role of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I might also recall a government proposal for gun control in this country.

All that is part of the means of action this government has to fight against organized crime of all kinds.

● (1650)

Just as you did, Mr. Speaker, I heard that controlling firearms in Canada, controlling their circulation, sale, distribution and use would have the direct effect of controlling organized crime or facing up to it. However, it is becoming ever more obvious that we control the firearms of law-abiding citizens. The firearms of the so-called criminals or bandits are not better controlled. As if a gangster will have his weapon registered. We would be very naive to believe this. I can hardly understand why the minister and his predecessors put forward this kind of arguments to say that the government is serious about this control.

I believe the minister said earlier that over 2,168 people are employed in the fight against organized crime. So there should be some action, some fight. What has the government to conceal about their methods? On the one hand the government is serious about controlling organized crime, they have the means, the methods, the men and, on the other hand, there is more and more uncertainty, fear, dissatisfaction among the public in Canada as far as the administration of justice in general is concerned. Therefore why not reconcile those two common and converging goals and set up a public inquiry on organized crime so as to stir up public opinion and reconsider methods used by the RCMP and other police forces.

Mr. Speaker, when I happen to think about it I wonder sometime if society itself is really committed to fighting crime. Not long ago—and I am sure that members from Quebec will remember that event—important demonstrations were being held in Quebec, not by anybody but by our law enforcement agents, our policemen, who merely wanted to pair up in police cruisers. They stated in a very clear, efficient and strong manner the reasons for this request. Of course, this does not come under federal government jurisdiction but it is part of the same society, the same approach. This request allowed for a remarkable debate. Public opinion supported our policemen's request. I did too because I thought it was normal that our policemen be not only well organized and equipped but that they could work in a way not to serve as targets for criminals and be in a position to defend themselves. How often have I intervened in the House, since 1968, asking the government to invest more money in crime prevention and juvenile delinquency! When I was a member of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, we looked into the matter. It is absolutely unbelievable that it should take so long to act on it. One need but consult the figures published by Statistics Canada, and repeated by the Solicitor General and again by