

Oral Questions

district post office officials have been illegally passing on mail to the security branch of the RCMP for 40 years without the knowledge of either the minister or his senior officials here in Ottawa. Were these illegal interceptions of the mail approved by those in charge of the district post offices or were they undertaken by employees of the post offices who had been hired by the RCMP and were they undertaken without the knowledge of the district post office managers or were both methods used to carry out the nefarious practice which the Postmaster General has admitted to the press?

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, the investigation is still proceeding and a dossier is being compiled in order to permit prompt and complete co-operation with the McDonald Commission. The information we have to date would indicate that the methods varied and that the information was provided at the request of the RCMP, primarily by people involved with security and intelligence in the post office and primarily without the knowledge of the regional managers and their immediate subordinates.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Is the minister telling the House that for 40 years employees of his department have been co-operating with the security branch of the RCMP to violate the Post Office Act without either the RCMP or the Solicitor General informing him of that fact? Is he telling us that one arm of the government does not know what the other arm is doing?

Mr. Blais: I would say there is some indication, although there are no specific records, that the practice could have gone back to the late thirties. However, from the evidence I have been able to ascertain the practice was primarily during the early part of the seventies and it was at the request of the RCMP. There was no knowledge in the upper echelons of the post office about that co-operation.

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JUSTICE AND LEGAL AFFAIRS**REQUEST TWO FORMER SOLICITORS GENERAL APPEAR BEFORE COMMITTEE**

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Solicitor General. Yesterday I moved that the two predecessors of the Solicitor General be asked to come before the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs to give evidence so that the facts of the whole matter might be heard—

Some hon. Members: Order!

Mr. Woolliams: My question to the Solicitor General is this: has he discussed this matter with his two predecessors and are they willing to go before the committee and tell all?

Mr. Speaker: Order. It would take some special permission from the House to enable that to happen.

[Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands).]

FISHERIES**REQUEST FOR REPORT ON MEETING WITH NEWFOUNDLAND MINISTER**

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Fisheries. Can he tell the House the outcome of his meeting with his counterpart, the Minister of Fisheries in Newfoundland? Has any agreement been reached with regard to a joint program to deal with such pressing problems as fleet replacement, and so on?

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries): The conversation took place on three basic issues. One was the boat subsidies which I have indicated would not be available for the current year because the allocation is already spent and also because it is clear under the act which allows us to pay these subsidies that they must be paid directly to fishermen not to provincial authorities. Another matter which was raised was the question of buffer zones between areas where different types of gear are in use. I made it clear that these were matters for the regional director in consultation with the fishermen and their organizations who are perfectly competent to deal with them. The provincial government will also take part in these discussions. On the third issue having to do with one plant, Booth Fisheries, I indicated that the report on the present season had not yet arrived, and for that reason I could not give much more information than that which everybody else knows.

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● (1502)

INQUIRY OF THE MINISTRY

Hon. Alvin Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Prime Minister, if he would not mind staying for a while.

Mr. Hees: Come on back, Pierre; you are not working to union rules.

Mr. Clark: This is the kind of contempt that we always get in this House.

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I would ask your permission to reserve my question until the Prime Minister is in the House.