

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Trudeau: I suggest that the question is argumentative, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact the terms of reference seem to contemplate a rather leisurely unhurried examination of the problem, will the Prime Minister consider discussing with the members of the commission their views as to possible changes in the terms of reference in order to give them an opportunity to point up the urgency, seriousness and gravity of the current problems?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I am quite sure that the commission senses the urgency of the problem, as does every member of the opposition. We are engaged in debating the Throne Speech, so let us hear from the opposition their ideas as to how the terms of reference of the commission should be altered.

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE**PENAL REFORM—REQUEST FOR REFERENCE OF REPORT TO COMMITTEE**

Mr. Harold E. Winch (Vancouver East): My question is directed to the Solicitor General. Is consideration being given to referring the royal commission report on penal reform to a committee of this House or a special joint committee of both Houses in order that the views of members may be conveyed to the government through a report to parliament?

Hon. G. J. McIlraith (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, I had anticipated that that report would be studied by the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs when the estimates of the Solicitor General's department were before the committee. However, I would be glad to take any other suggestion under consideration.

[*Later:*]

Mr. Winch: Mr. Speaker, in view of the Solicitor General's answer to my original question, could I ask the minister whether he would give very serious consideration to re-establishing the joint committee of the Senate and House of Commons that was set up two years ago and which, in my estimation, did a wonderful job in studying all questions relating to the penitentiary and penal system?

Mr. McIlraith: Mr. Speaker, I will be very glad to take that matter under consideration, but I must add that I was very favourably

[Mr. Stanfield.]

impressed with the work done by the new Standing Committee of the House on Justice and Legal Affairs during the last session of Parliament on matters coming under the responsibility of the department.

SENTENCES FOR OFFENCES INVOLVING DRUGS

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): I wish to ask a supplementary question dealing with criminal reform, Mr. Speaker. I direct the minister's attention to the Narcotic Control Act. In view of the fact that in Calgary, and the same thing is happening in other cities, seven young people ranging in ages from 16 to 21 yesterday received sentences totalling 29 years on charges involving marijuana, is it the policy of the government to instruct federal Crown prosecutors to press for sentences up to five years so that this group of young people so incarcerated may be used as a deterrent against the use of drugs in the universities and high schools, and is this not a misuse of the law?

Hon. G. J. McIlraith (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, I think hon. members will recognize that it is quite impossible for anyone to accept the premises that were added to the question asked by the hon. member. I understand that this question was asked yesterday of the Minister of Justice, within whose jurisdiction the matter lies, and that he answered the question yesterday.

Mr. Woolliams: A further supplementary question, since the RCMP comes under the minister's jurisdiction. In light of the answer given by the minister, would he at an early date give a full report to the House on the pressing for these sentences imposed on seven young people in Calgary? Is it also the policy of the minister to instruct the RCMP to act as stoolpigeons, to grow beards and mix with students in order to obtain evidence?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. McIlraith: Mr. Speaker, The question of sentencing is one for the courts. I do not propose to seek to instruct anyone as to what a particular sentence in the courts should be. The courts have responsibility for determining the law and making decisions based upon the law. I completely refute, of course, the suggestion that the RCMP act as stoolpigeons. I do not have personal knowledge of the seven cases referred to and the basis of the sentences, but I assume that the court had some reason for the sentences that were imposed.