

Oral Questions

Mr. Nowlan: I appreciate the minister's answer which tied in pretty well with what he said in committee. The Commissioner of the RCMP, who was also in attendance at the committee, admitted an internal inquiry indicated that a certain number of files of a criminal intelligence nature were missing from police offices. Because of the gravity of the allegation involving potentially union and/or political people in the land, does the minister not feel that he should take some initiative to put Dr. Shulman on the spot—if this is possible—and meet with him to see just what he has rather than sending an officer of the RCMP to his office to start talking about the Official Secrets Act?

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, I would love to put Dr. Shulman on the spot. I might say that these files which were stolen were stolen in the years 1969 and 1970 approximately and not from an RCMP office in Toronto but from an Ontario government office, the criminal intelligence office of the Ontario government.

We sent an RCMP officer to Dr. Shulman to find out what information he had but he would not give the investigator any further information. I have asked the RCMP to look into this again and, following the meeting last night, I asked them to conduct an investigation into this whole matter. The RCMP told me they recommended that the files on this operation should not have been in that particular building but should always have been in a police building with proper security. So far, the Ontario government has not acted on that recommendation.

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, I also have a question for the Solicitor General who was talking about files being stolen. In light of the fact that under the Criminal Code we can issue search warrants, has the minister considered having a search warrant issued to find out if Dr. Shulman has such stolen files in his possession and so protect the individuals in question and then lay charges under the Criminal Code against Dr. Shulman if necessary?

Mr. Allmand: Following the meeting last night, Mr. Speaker, I spoke with the Commissioner of the RCMP and told him that this was a very serious matter because nobody was really protected as long as criminal record files and tapes of wire taps and so on were being leaked. I asked him to take whatever action was necessary to stop this sort of thing.

Mr. Woolliams: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I agree, it is a serious matter. Any crime is serious. Here is a person, as admitted by the Solicitor General, who is in possession of stolen property. I suggest he be charged, and I would ask the minister this: Has he given any thought to obtaining an injunction from the High Court of Ontario to prevent the use and publication of private files relating to individuals who have never been charged with any crime. I ask this because that information should not be disseminated across this land by the publication of a book for money purposes.

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member. I think, when files like this can be distributed and made public by a man in such a light way, that this is a severe threat to the civil liberties of individuals. I am

[Mr. Allmand.]

not the Attorney General. I have no responsibility for prosecution, but I will certainly take under consideration these suggestions made by the hon. member.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

VIET NAM—PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR CLOSING EMBASSY IN SAIGON

Mr. John Reynolds (Burnaby-Richmond-Delta): Mr. Speaker, may I address a question to the Acting Prime Minister relating to Viet Nam. Can the minister answer a simple question: Who gave the order to evacuate the Canadian embassy?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the order was given, or the authority was given to the ambassador to consult with friendly governments in the area and to co-ordinate his movement with theirs. He took responsibility, finally, for the decision and I think he exercised it correctly. At that time it was quite clear that the only embassies which would remain in Viet Nam were the French and the British. I believe that in the interests of Canada and our Canadian mission, the correct decision was taken.

Mr. Reynolds: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. After the consultation, did the ambassador ask for final authority, or did he assume the final authority on his own?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult for me or for the hon. member, sitting here, to understand or appreciate the local situation. In the circumstances we gave authority to the ambassador to exercise his judgment, within the instructions. As I said, I believe he acted correctly. It is the decision we would have made in the circumstances.

VIET NAM—REASON FOR URGENCY IN CLOSING EMBASSY IN SAIGON—POSSIBILITY OF NAMING CANADIANS WHO REMAINED AS IMMIGRATION OFFICERS

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a supplementary question to the Acting Prime Minister? As we already have some kind of relationship with Hanoi, what was the urgency, then, for disbanding the embassy in Saigon?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, I do not understand the purport of the question. In my view it is very likely that if Saigon is overrun and that government does collapse, authority will reside not with North Viet Nam; it will reside with the provisional revolutionary government that has aspired to be the government of South Viet Nam.

Mr. Friesen: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Since several Canadians volunteered to stay behind in Saigon, why did not the Canadian government authorize them to become immigration officials, in order to aid those Vietnamese who were abandoned by the Canadian government?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for St. John's East.