

Communist Activities in Canada

a matter of opinion as to what are the best methods to be adopted to prevent the spread of communism in our country. I firmly believe that it has diminished over the last few years.

I firmly believe that some years ago communist leadership was, to a regrettable degree, influential in some labour unions and the question arose as to whether or not some action should be taken by legislative authority in Canada to purge the labour unions. That was not done. We relied on the good sense, good judgment, patriotism and Christian traditions of the labouring people themselves to see that they got rid of these obnoxious influences.

I feel quite confident that they did a much better job than could have been done by the police attempting to enforce any laws adopted by this parliament in that regard. Labour unions in Canada are responsible democratic organizations and I feel sure that a large number who have no leaning whatsoever toward communism or any of its affiliated isms would have resented any attempt by legislative authority and the police to determine how their unions should be officered and who would receive votes at their elections. I think that at the present time we all have great reason to be satisfied with the autonomous purges that the labour movement of Canada has carried out in its own ranks. There are laws on our statute books, laws in the Criminal Code, which are sufficient, if applied, to deal with all overt acts directed against the security of the state.

The leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew) has just said that the Department of Justice has been negligent in not prosecuting the publishers of a certain number of newspapers published in Toronto and elsewhere in languages other than English or French, and even one published in English. When we give lip service to the distribution of constitutional powers and responsibility between the federal parliament and the provincial legislation we must continue to recognize that under the constitution the responsibility for the administration of justice in each province is that of the attorney general of that province. The character and tone of these newspapers now published in the city of Toronto are not very different from the character and tone of newspapers published in Toronto while the hon. member, who has just taken his seat, was premier of the province of Ontario and had a devoted and respected colleague as his attorney general.

Again it is a matter of opinion as to when it is advisable to launch criminal prosecutions. For my part I am not prepared to say

that the attorney general of the government of which the hon. gentleman was the leader was negligent. I think, in his judgment, he did his best to maintain law and order in that province, and that if he had been of opinion that treasonable acts were being committed in the city of Toronto that were really dangerous to the security of the state he would have taken action.

Mr. Drew: I do not wish to interrupt the Prime Minister but I think that an incorrect impression should not be left here. I would remind the Prime Minister that communist activities are peculiarly under the authority of the Department of Justice, and that the provincial governments have no facilities available, nor have they attempted to set up facilities, to deal with this particular problem.

Mr. St. Laurent: Mr. Speaker, it is not proper to say that communistic activities are under the Department of Justice. By statute the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson) is the head of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police are active in endeavouring to suppress every kind of activity that might be a threat to the security of the state. They co-operate with provincial police forces, and have the co-operation of provincial police forces. But when prosecutions are to be instituted before the courts it is the privilege, the responsibility and the duty of the attorney general of the province where those activities are carried on to institute the proceedings. Of course there is a difference between peacetime administration of justice and wartime measures taken for the security of the state. The hon. member referred to what was done in 1940 and 1942, but that was done under the Defence of Canada Regulations which had the authority of law under the War Measures Act, and which no longer have the authority of law in this country, a thing for which we are all thankful. We are all thankful that conditions in Canada are no longer such that the special measures required during the war period still need to be applied. We are now in peacetime, and the administration of justice is the privilege and responsibility of the departments of the attorneys general of the respective provinces.

I am not suggesting that they are not doing their duty. They do their duty in the manner that they think best. One of these attorneys general attempts to administer a padlock law. There is much resentment in many parts of the country over his attempts to do so.

Since the report of the royal commission we have been giving close and careful attention to the recommendations contained therein. I can assure the house that nothing