

## Oral Questions

## NATIONAL SECURITY

## POLICE AND SECURITY PLANNING AND ANALYSIS GROUP—POSSIBLE ENLARGEMENT OF SCOPE AND ROLE

**Mr. Robert C. Coates (Cumberland-Colchester North):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. Are the role and scope of responsibility of the Police and Security Planning and Analysis Group the same today as they were when established by the government as the security planning and research group and, if not, on what date and under what authority was the decision taken to enlarge the role and scope of operations of this group?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I have the impression this is a question that might well be placed on the order paper. Indeed, there are questions closely resembling that asked by the hon. member already on the order paper. Unless there is some urgency or some other aspect to the question—perhaps the hon. member would rephrase the question.

**Mr. Coates:** Mr. Speaker, I think I am asking a very serious question which has tremendous import to this nation and I should like to point out why.

• (1210)

On September 21, 1971, this House was made aware of the scope and responsibility of an organization known as the security and research planning group. On April 4, 1973, another Solicitor General, in answer to a starred question, made certain information available to the hon. member for Leeds indicating the scope and responsibility of a new organization known as the Police and Security Planning and Analysis Group.

My question is put in all seriousness to the Prime Minister, and it is a very important question which I think has a great deal of urgency. I want to know—and I believe parliament should have the right to know—when the scope and responsibility of this organization changed, if they have changed, on what basis the changes were made, and what reasons led the government to enlarge the scope as outlined in the answer to the question of the hon. member for Leeds on April 4, 1973.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member may be right but if, every time the Chair makes a ruling that a question might be put on the order paper, there is a question of privilege or a point of order or an argument raised whether or not the Chair is wrong in its judgment, hon. members can see where that would lead. I am sure I must be wrong very often, so there would be a debate in many instances. The Standing Order does provide a remedy for hon. members in that the matter can always be brought forward at the time of adjournment. At the same time, we have some minutes left before the end of the question period and if one of the ministers would like to reply quickly to the hon. member's question I have no objection.

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with you that your ruling had nothing to do with the importance of the question asked. I realize its importance. It is probably also urgent in the eyes of the hon. member. But I think that the suggestion Your Honour made of putting the question on the order paper

[Mr. Stanbury.]

is the best way of getting the answer from me. I would have to ascertain from the Solicitor General if there have been any changes, in depth or otherwise, in the set-up. To my knowledge, none have been made aside from a slight readjustment in name. The Solicitor General has invited hon. members to visit the premises and to meet the group. We are as open as possible on this. But the suggestion of putting the question on the order paper is the best way for me to give a thorough answer to the hon. member.

## INQUIRY AS TO REASON FOR REMOVING RESPONSIBILITY FOR SECURITY MATTERS FROM ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

**Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert):** Mr. Speaker, I say with great deference that the suggestion that questions be put on the order paper indicates that Your Honour has not carefully examined the degree to which this government covers up information by not giving answers to questions on the order paper.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** I want to direct a question to the Prime Minister, whose responsibility as Prime Minister is paramount on the matter of the security of our country from within and without. I want to ask him this question. In relation to the security of classified information, which normally would be under the control of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, has anything taken place in recent weeks or months that indicates that the RCMP cannot look after security of that kind and security in general?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Well, Mr. Speaker, here again I would give the same answer but I would also like to make a suggestion. If the system of putting questions on the order paper is not satisfactory—the House will realize that in the case of questions such as this one it is impossible for me and probably for most ministers to come up with an answer when the question is posed without notice—perhaps we could adopt the British system and change the question period into one where notice would be given to the ministers in advance. Then, they would answer from time to time in the House to this type of question. I would be very happy to do that, Mr. Speaker.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Even on this very happy occasion of the right hon. gentleman's fifth anniversary as Prime Minister, I find it necessary to ascertain from him why there has been a change and why such security has been removed from the RCMP by means of the establishment of this organization, the Police and Security Planning and Analysis Group. Why, I ask him, is the security of classified information taken over now by a group responsible only to the Solicitor General? Does he not realize that this kind of thing would permit concealment, would permit the government to pretend that certain documents were—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The right hon. gentleman has asked the question.