

earlier in the afternoon. My question is very simple, and it may clear the muddy waters.

Is the Solicitor General prepared to answer questions put to him by members of the opposition on any matters that may come before, have come before, and could come before the McDonald commission? I refer, for example, to the statement that it was necessary to open mail in connection with the Japanese terrorist, when in fact the evidence this afternoon seems to be that the real meat of the evidence came from an authorized wiretap. Is the Solicitor General prepared to answer such questions whether on the McDonald commission, the Laycraft commission or the Keable commission?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Surely, the proper way to test that matter is to put one such question, rather than asking again for an interpretation. I say respectfully that the whole import of what I attempted to do earlier this afternoon was to indicate that the way to find this out is to put the questions. I really do not want to invite a renewal of the rather long, though important, argument we had this afternoon. If hon. members have questions and want to find out whether the Solicitor General is going to answer, they should put them.

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Speaker, I shall come to the last part of my question. In light of the argument between the Prime Minister and the leader of the New Democratic Party, will the Solicitor General take it upon himself to clear the air about the evidence in reference to the Japanese terrorist? Was it, in fact, as a result of a legal wiretap, or the result partly or wholly of opening mail, which was illegal at that time and which the minister is now going to try to make legal?

● (1642)

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, surely that is evidence which is presently being dealt with by the commission. There has been evidence, as was indicated by the Prime Minister and myself on Friday, which covers about 30 pages of transcript. I do not know whether counsel for the commission will be calling other evidence on that particular point. I am awaiting that decision with some anticipation.

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Speaker, I certainly bow to your ruling, but I have asked a clearcut question. We have had wiffing and waffling from this minister, even though he has only been in the portfolio for a short time. He may go down as "the minister of wiffing and waffling." I put a direct question to him: Will he ascertain from the evidence, of which he has a transcript, if the evidence determined whether the Japanese terrorist was apprehended as a result of opening mail illegally, or from a legalized, or legal, wiretap? It is a simple, concise and precise question: please answer in the same way.

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, indeed, I am proceeding to read that particular transcript in order to draw my own conclusions. They will be my own conclusions.

Mr. Woolliams: Draw them.

Oral Questions

Mr. Blais: I will draw my own conclusions, because I am sure they will be germane to the debate on the bill which I will be introducing, hopefully this week, relating to mail opening and amendments to relevant legislation.

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Speaker, the minister says he is going to bring in a bill. Is he prepared, as the right hon. gentleman from Prince Albert suggested, to wait before he produces a bill to legalize the opening of mail, that is, to wait until the commission has either brought in an interim or a final report in that regard? Or is he going to rush into this House of Commons, like a bull in a china shop, with the legislation?

Mr. Blais: I will be introducing the bill, hopefully, this week. As was pointed out last week, I believe by the Acting Solicitor General, the Minister of Justice, when a similar question was put, the bill contains a clause whereby the duration of that provision will be limited, I believe, to one year after the McDonald inquiry has made its report.

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NATIONAL SECURITY

RIGHT OF MINISTERS TO KNOW HOW SECURITY PERSONNEL OPERATE—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): My question is directed to the Solicitor General. In December, the Prime Minister said that a minister should not have the right to know how security personnel are carrying on their work. He went on to say that if there is illegal activity, we have the protection of the courts. I ask the Solicitor General if he discussed this theory with the Prime Minister before his appointment, and does he agree with that theory of ministerial responsibility?

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, I would like to review the comments of the hon. gentleman.

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I presume the Solicitor General wants to reconsider the Prime Minister's comments. Let me put the exact statement to the Solicitor General. The Prime Minister said that it is a matter of stating, as a principle, that the minister of the day should not have the right to know what the police are doing constantly in investigative practices, what they are looking at, what they are looking for, and the way they are doing it. The Prime Minister went on to say that if there is concern about illegal police activities:

We have the protection of the courts. If you want to break into somebody's house, you get a warrant.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I do not want to interrupt the hon. member, but that is rather a long preamble to a supplementary question.

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I will try to shorten it. I should like to continue, as it is a matter of some importance. I will continue the quotation: