

## House of Commons Debates

## OFFICIAL REPORT

Speaker: The Honourable Gaspard Fauteux

Wednesday, March 2, 1949

The house met at three o'clock.

## PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO REPORT IN MONTREAL "GAZETTE"  
OF MARCH 2

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister): I am again compelled, Mr. Speaker, to rise on a matter of personal privilege, but I hope it can be disposed of without raising any uproar, because it has to do with the rethreshing of old straw.

The Montreal *Gazette* of this morning has on the front page a column with this heading:

## Serious Charges

Misuse of R.C.M.P. Laid to St. Laurent as  
Secrecy Ends

"Methods of Gestapo"

P.C. Leader Urges Prime Minister be Called to  
Account for "Prostitution"

The article is written by Mr. Arthur Blakely. It goes on to say:

Serious charges against Prime Minister (then minister of justice) St. Laurent, involving the misuse of the R.C.M.P., are contained in the famous secret letter on Hong Kong which opposition leader Drew wrote to ex-Prime Minister King in 1942, and which Mr. Drew made public today.

The letter charges Mr. St. Laurent as justice minister with having attempted "to suppress the truth" in the Hong Kong debacle "by imitating the methods of the gestapo." It urged that he be "called to public account without delay" for "this shameful prostitution" of the R.C.M.P.

A little further down the article continues:

The Drew letter accuses Mr. St. Laurent of having used, through the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, questionable methods to secure evidence which would counterbalance testimony that the twenty military vehicles which were to have accompanied the troopship to Hong Kong could have been loaded had they been made available.

Editorially the leader writer of the *Gazette* makes this comment, under the title, "War secrecy' concealed strange actions":

These are charges which would seem to require a full and detailed reply. But Mr. St. Laurent says that no reply can be made . . . This irregular use of the R.C.M.P. in Canada has never received the examination which the charge would seem to deserve. The delay in making the matter public has been prolonged for seven years.

I am afraid the inaccuracy must be attributed to the fact that Mr. Blakely was probably not here in 1942, and I do not know

where the leader writer of the *Gazette* may have been at that time. But I wish to call the attention of those who may be interested—if there are still any who are interested—to the fact that on July 28, 1942, this matter was fully gone into, as reported at pages 4868 and following of *Hansard* of that year. Mr. Bruce, the then member for Parkdale, raised this question, among others:

How can the government ever justify using the authority of the criminal investigations branch of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, a great and honoured force, to obtain evidence in a civil inquiry...

At page 4869 Mr. Bruce went on as follows:

I am asking the government to justify its action in using the criminal investigation branch of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the purpose of getting information in a civil inquiry—not a criminal inquiry.

Then on page 4870:

I think it is a prostitution—

The word is not new.

—of the great Royal Canadian Mounted Police to ask them to assume a responsibility of the kind which they were asked to assume, and which is a direct responsibility of the minister of justice (Mr. St. Laurent) for having done so.

I went fully into all the facts in that connection, as appears on pages 4870, 4871 and 4872; and when I got through, the hon. member for Parkdale was generous enough to make this statement, as reported at page 4872:

Mr. Speaker, I rise to a question of privilege. As the minister of justice in quoting from a Vancouver newspaper has cited portions of a letter submitted by Colonel Drew to the Prime Minister, to my leader and to the leaders of the other groups, I may say that I also was quoting from that letter and I was not attacking the minister of justice personally.

In reply I said:

I thank the hon. member for Parkdale for the withdrawal of the implication at least which his former words contained.

Anyone who may be interested at this time in these events will find that the matter was fully gone into, with the result that the then hon. member for Parkdale made the statement I have just quoted.

Mr. George A. Drew (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has referred to an earlier discussion of this matter, and I should think he might now wish to have