

Supply—Justice

I told you a little while ago. I was informed, after I had interviewed the commissioner, that I could inform my friend in Nanaimo that he would have no difficulty in crossing the border. Presumably the Canadian authorities have no particular interest in preventing Canadian citizens in crossing the United States border. That is something for the United States officials to be concerned about. Therefore if my friend had any difficulty in crossing the border it could only have been on the basis of information supplied to the United States officials, and it would have been information not revealing that he was guilty of any criminal activity in Canada at all or being in any position that is against the Canadian law.

Mr. Fulton: I think the hon. gentleman's statement is too sweeping when he says that the information given to the United States officials could only have come from a Canadian source. I think that is making too wide a statement. Let me put it to him in reverse. We have a large number of border crossings from the United States into Canada. It is the policy of the Canadian government, and I believe it is the policy of the Canadian people, that we should not admit into our country persons who are undesirable. We do not have any information on them but when they present themselves as applicants to cross the border the only place where we can get that information is from the country of origin. Yet we require that information to determine whether a person is suitable to be allowed to cross the border, whether as an immigrant, a visitor, or in any other category, and if we require that information from countries from which people come to cross our border we will not get very far in receiving that information if we in turn were to refuse to give the information in our possession on persons in Canada who may be crossing the border the other way. It seems to me the matter is as simple as that. I would be quite prepared to accept the criticism and to regret it and to assure the hon. gentleman that we will do our best to improve the standard where he says that the investigation was conducted carelessly and resulted in embarrassment and perhaps even unnecessary suffering and some loss on the part of the person investigated.

I make no comment on the justification of the investigation because I do not know the facts. Anyone in charge of a department and of a force would say, as I say now, that the desire is to have the best qualified persons employed in that force and carrying on the work of that force; and certainly with respect to the security type of work that the hon. gentleman has brought before us today it is necessary to have the highest degree of skill in order to carry out that sort of investigation.

It may be that the investigation was not carried out with that degree of skill; I do not know, but I can say that it is my desire and the desire of the commissioner constantly to improve the standard of all branches of the force so that there should be no cause for complaint on that or any other ground.

On the ground of the general proposition that information is exchanged I think it would be obvious that information has to be exchanged. It seems to me that the thing to be looked at is that we control the exchange of information and we certainly control the accuracy of the information and that we control the release of the information.

Mr. Cameron: There is another point that should be cleared up and that is, what yardstick do you apply to the term "desirability" because we have a rather different yardstick in Canada?

Mr. Fulton: In what context?

Mr. Cameron: We have a different yardstick from that which obtains in other parts of the world, particularly in the United States?

Mr. Fulton: In what context does the hon. member use the word "desirability"?

Mr. Cameron: The minister mentioned the fact that it was our duty, if you like, to make sure that a person was a desirable person. In Canadian law a person may be a perfectly desirable Canadian citizen, but there might be other countries which do not regard him as being desirable for reasons which we do not consider valid. Does the minister apply their yardstick to Canadian citizens?

Mr. Fulton: No, my understanding is—and I shall look into this to make sure that I am correct—that we do not in any case where Canadian authorities are asked to investigate make any attempt to assess the result of the investigation. It is merely a factual report that goes out and it is up to the persons who may be applying, who are interested in receiving the information, to assess it and apply their standards. In the same way, if we ourselves were to receive reports we would not rely on someone else's assessment; we would have to make that assessment ourselves in accordance with our own standard.

Mr. Macdonald (Vancouver-Kingsway): Since the hon. member for Timiskaming has referred to himself and said there is a file that may be his but probably is not his at all, I should like to say something that he was too modest to say, and say it with some knowledge of the labour movement and some knowledge of my hon. friend. He is well known in the labour movement as one of those