

*Inquiries of the Ministry***NATIONAL DEFENCE****INQUIRY AS TO THEFTS OF ARMS
AND AMMUNITION**

On the orders of the day:

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Prime Minister in connection with the breaking into the armouries at Shawinigan, Quebec, this morning and the removal of rifles, semi-automatic carbines and the like. Is the Prime Minister in a position to report what measures are being taken and have been taken to protect the armed forces and also the supplies in the armouries from dastardly conduct such as this, which can only lead to contempt and a continuation—this being the second case—of the belief that lawlessness reigns in the areas in which the armouries are located?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I will ask the Minister of National Defence to deal with that question.

Hon. Paul Hellyer (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I do have a preliminary report with respect to this break-in this morning, but a number of the facts contained in the report have not yet been confirmed. I suspect that some of the earlier information in this report is also not accurate. Therefore, rather than make a report now which perhaps would not be borne out on confirmation, I would prefer to take this as notice and prepare a full report to give the house tomorrow.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, while the hon. gentleman seeks dependable information, can he not tell the house what is being done to prevent occurrences such as this? I said a moment ago that there had been two cases, but I understand that this is the third. What is being done? What protection is being given to our army—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Diefenbaker: —to our armed forces?

An hon. Member: The minister should resign.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I do not know what is laughable about what I said. These men were tied up and I should like to know what is being done, apart from the smile being given the house now by the benign gentleman.

Mr. Hellyer: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday certain precautionary measures have been taken. I presume that these measures were taken in this case. An effort was apparently made to blow the safe where the working parts of the weapons were stored, but this is one of the facts on which I am awaiting confirmation at the moment.

[Mr. Ryan.]

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): A supplementary question to the minister. Will he tell the house when he makes his report whether there was anyone on duty at the armouries, any watchman; and did the persons who broke in do so prior to the staff coming on duty at 7.40 this morning? The minister is preparing a report for the house, so may I ask him whether he can tell us, either now or when he brings down his report, if it is customary to leave armouries overnight without anyone on duty, and is this a demonstration of the security measures which he told the house yesterday his department was taking?

Mr. Hellyer: I thought I had made that clear yesterday. In some cases they are not given around the clock protection because it would not be feasible to do so; but in this case there were people on duty, and I understand three men were bound by the armed robbers before they made off with such equipment as they were able to get.

Mr. Douglas: Did these three men who were bound not come on duty after the robbers were already in the building?

Mr. Hellyer: Not to my knowledge, but this is one of the things I should like to be sure about before making a categorical statement.

Hon. Gordon Churchill (Winnipeg South Centre): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the statement of the minister yesterday, in which he referred to "units where it is not feasible to provide armed guards", etc., is the minister not inviting robberies by stating publicly that some of our armouries will not be protected around the clock?

Mr. Hellyer: Mr. Speaker, I think almost everyone in the country who would be interested to know that already knows it, so I do not think that my confirmation of an obvious fact would make any difference in that respect.

Mr. Douglas: A supplementary question. Can the minister give the house the assurance that no one will steal the Bomarc missiles?

Mr. Hellyer: Mr. Speaker, the question which comes to my mind is whether, in the mind of the hon. gentleman, he would think it was worth while.

Mr. Stuart A. Fleming (Okanagan-Revelstoke): A supplementary question to the Minister of National Defence. Would the minister, in the course of his inquiries, also find out whether the working parts of these weapons were locked up in the safe?