

Supply—Justice

knew from facts that this man had done things or had said things—I think “done” was the word but I do not have an exact note of what was said—and was a danger to the state. The minister said that as this man was a danger to the state it was necessary to have him under some kind of surveillance. If this man has done things which have threatened the security of Canada, then I do not care what the legal officers have told the minister, he must take the responsibility. After all, his advisers are only his advisers. The minister has the last say and if he knows this man has done something to make him a danger to the security of Canada, then I say to the minister he appears to be guilty of an offence. Let that offence be charged. Is there any great harm in a man’s being acquitted of some crime with which he is charged? I believe that tonight every Canadian would rather be charged with an offence, tried and acquitted than be like Spencer who has to go through the rest of his life under surveillance.

I hope that before the sitting concludes tonight the minister will say how long this man will be under surveillance. Will it be 20 years, 30 years? I want to hear him say it. I say to him, as I said at the beginning, that his argument was weak. It was a political argument, an argument he put forward as a pawn of the Prime Minister to cover up a decision that was made by the Prime Minister some time ago. Maybe the minister could tell us tonight when that decision was made. Was it made in May at the time the Dorion report was coming out? Why was it made at such an opportune time, if it was made at that time? Was it used as a smokescreen to cover something they wanted the public to forget? I ask this question because at that time we heard in the corridors the Prime Minister was going to dissolve parliament and hold an election. I think that great columnist Douglas Fisher was writing about an election at that time and he named the date several months ahead of time. He did not get the information as a result of a cabinet leak; he knew what was going to happen.

I say it was a very weak argument. The Prime Minister was guilty of tergiversation. He tergiversated in offering explanations about the holding of an inquiry, and I say that you are turning your back on the principles that you hold so dear or you should hold so dear. In my opinion this seems to be the very crux of the matter. We may say that this debate has gone on a long time. It is

[Mr. Woolliams.]

interesting to note, and I am going to direct your attention to it, Mr. Chairman, that not only have we spoken on this matter but there has been an equal number of speakers from the government side. This indicates the government is concerned. The hon. member for St. John’s West has been thrown into the debate, and he is quite an able debater. It was hoped he would throw up another smokescreen, but the trouble was he went along with the Tories and let down the Grits. Nevertheless he was thrown into the debate. If the government wants to get these estimates through, and I am certainly one of those who would like to get them through and get on with the legislative program, then why does the Minister of Justice not say: Let us have an inquiry. Let us give this man a hearing, and let us give him the kind of hearing the Prime Minister said should be established under the new procedure to which the hon. member for St. John’s West referred.

If that was to be the new procedure, why was it not adopted in this case? Why was a different procedure followed in contradiction of the policy outlined by the Prime Minister? These are questions I should like answered. I think the minister should answer all of these questions. I am going to repeat them. How long will this man be under surveillance? When did the minister first decide not to give him an inquiry? When was that decision made? Was it made on the spur of the moment in the house when he was asked questions on orders of the day or was careful consideration given to it by the cabinet? The Prime Minister said this man had been treated justly. Even if he has been fired from his job, even if he has lost his salary, even if he has lost his pension, the Prime Minister says it is just for him not to be given an inquiry.

I should have liked to hear some of the members of the Liberal party had they been sitting on this side of the house and we over there, if we had treated Spencer in the same manner. They would have rattled the benches; they would have rattled the electronic appliances. They would have said to us that we were nothing but dictators. I recall the Coyne affair, a man who increased his own pension. Today the minister said you only hold a job in the civil service at the will of the people.

Mr. Cashin: Will the hon. member answer a question?