

the House at that time was information provided by the RCMP. Once again, I have no indication that that information was not correct.

Also, in the course of my reply in the House, I believe I indicated that no material was destroyed which was in the possession of the security service and no material pertaining to any inquiry underway in the province of Quebec was destroyed during the course of that consideration. I also wish to bring back to the memory of hon. members that following that consideration, the fact that it was brought to the attention of the House, a very strict directive was issued by the Commissioner of the force indicating that no further destruction of files of any kind was to take place during the period of time the inquiries were under way. I will of course get back to the police officer who made that statement in Montreal to see whether he may have information which was not available to us at that time.

DATE OF FILES INCINERATED

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): The minister at the same time last June left the clear impression with the House that all the documents that were destroyed dated back to a time well in advance of the 1972 break-in in Montreal. It was alleged last night by the same officer that the documents that were destroyed on June 3 were as recent as documents up to 1974, which included all the crucial documents that the federal inquiry would need and that the provincial inquiry would need. If they have been destroyed, I think the minister will agree that could make a complete farce of the inquiry. Will he then check with his officials to find out why he told the House the documents that were destroyed were in fact documents pertaining to a much earlier period?

Hon. Francis Fox (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, as far as documents being destroyed are concerned, any documents relating to allegations or accusations made against the force have been made fully available. The instances that have been related to the House over the past few days were related in good part insofar as the illegal operation was concerned to the Keable commission in Montreal and also to the McDonald royal commission in Ottawa. The same, of course, pertains to the allegation of break-in into the building which housed the computer tapes of the Parti Québécois.

● (1427)

As far as the dates of the documents are concerned, the CBC report in that regard is quite correct. I indicated in the House last summer that they dated back to 1966 in the sense that the oldest document destroyed dated back to 1966. I understand that the documents do go up to the period 1972-1973—I would have to check as to the exact date. I remind the House once again that there is a whole series of documents within the force, as in any other government department, with respect to which a normal policy of destruction is followed. I indicated at that time that the destruction which took place in Montreal had been carried out further to an audit which had

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been done in Montreal following a report given to the commanding officer of C Division, Montreal, indicating it was time that certain documents should be disposed of in accordance with normal force procedures.

Mr. Broadbent: In his answer in the House, the minister said the material dated back to 1966. But I would remind him he was responding to a question which specifically asked him whether there was any more recent material relating to 1971, 1972 or 1974. His reply clearly implied there was not—that, for example, there was no material relevant to the inquiry which had been set up a few weeks previously in Quebec. The hon. gentleman cannot have it both ways.

There seems to be a clear contradiction between what is now being said in Montreal and what the minister said in reply to the question put to him. I would like him to look into that.

My final question is this: would he inquire into the immediate steps which led to the order for the destruction of these documents being given on May 23. May 23, as the minister may now know, was the Monday of a long weekend. It would seem unusual to many Canadians that an order for the burning of the documents would be made on that particular day. Would the minister inquire on whose authority that order was given and why it was given on that particular day?

Mr. Fox: I remember seeing the report of the auditor which I asked to see at that time and it is my understanding that it was indeed dated May 23. I would have to check to see whether the officer in question worked on May 23; there are some police officers in the country who do work on May 23.

Mr. Broadbent: Burning documents?

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[Translation]

INDUSTRY

FOOTWEAR—SUGGESTED ADOPTION OF MEASURES TO PROTECT MANUFACTURERS

Mr. Léonel Beaudoin (Richmond): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. In a telegram addressed to the government on July 29, 1977, the Shoe Manufacturers' Association of Canada asked the government to impose severe quotas on footwear imports, particularly imports of shoes for ladies and little girls.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. This question is directed to the hon. Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce.

Mr. Beaudoin: In a letter dated November 15, 1977, the association reminds me of its dissatisfaction with the measures taken by the government and by the former Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. Therefore, I should like to ask the hon. minister whether he is aware of this telegram and whether he intends to go much further to save this industry and the thousands of workers whose jobs are in jeopardy?