

Oral Questions

service or that people simply did not tell the truth at the time of the conference with the minister?

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is any question of people not telling the truth. The people of whom the question was asked, namely the Commissioner and the director general of the security service, both replied there were no other illegalities to their knowledge. I have no doubt that that was the case. It seems quite clear that the director general of the security service was not advised of any illegal acts concerning the opening of the mail.

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REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION**POSSIBLE REDUCTION IN ROLE OF DEPARTMENT—
GOVERNMENT POSITION**

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algonia): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. In view of reports over the weekend in the press that the government has considered a reduction in the role of the Department of Regional Economic Expansion, can the minister assure the House there will be no reduction in the support and assistance by the government to expand and diversify the economy of slow growth areas of Canada?

[Translation]

Hon. Marcel Lessard (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I thank the hon. member for giving me the opportunity to dispel the rumor that went around over the airwaves across Canada last weekend. Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no question, and there will probably never be, of doing away with DREE because its role is much too important and if anything, people want it increased. I can therefore assure the hon. member that we shall also continue to look after the interests of his area.

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[English]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE**ALLEGED USE BY SECURITY FORCES OF MEDICAL FILES—
METHOD BY WHICH FILES OBTAINED**

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General. In view of the fact that reports, allegedly from RCMP sources, indicate that the key operations branch of the RCMP have been carrying on surveillance over university groups, teachers' federations, legitimate political parties and trade unions, and finally that they have been securing without authorization confidential medical files for the purpose of using these files to disrupt what they consider to be radical organizations, I want to ask the minister if the confidentiality of medical files has been violated by any of the sections under his control. If so, what is the purpose of securing these medical files? Is it for the

[Mr. Lawrence.]

purpose of blackmail? How can this possibly be used in any legitimate way by a democratic government?

Hon. Francis Fox (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, I want to first point out that there is no systematic surveillance of groups, be they political parties, unions or any other group such as the hon. member has mentioned. There is, of course, surveillance of individuals who may constitute a security risk to the country. In the case of the medical files that have been referred to, preliminary investigations indicate that there was access obtained to medical files as a result of threats that had been made against prominent Canadians from time to time. In the pursuit of their duty to protect these Canadians, the security service did obtain some medical information. I am told there were no surreptitious means employed in obtaining that information. In any event, as is the case with all the other practices and procedures employed by the RCMP, they are being referred to the royal commission inquiry into the practices and procedures of the RCMP.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the House would be interested in knowing how these medical files were secured. If they were not secured surreptitiously, were they secured with the authorization of the health authorities of the province in which they were secured and were they secured with the knowledge and consent of the individuals concerned?

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, I would be very surprised if they were obtained with the knowledge and consent of the individuals concerned. If it is quite clear that a threat of violence has been made by an individual, I believe it is proper for the RCMP security service to check out the nature and possibility of that threat. In other cases the matter was indeed, if they were obtained, with the consent of the people who remitted the files to the RCMP. As I indicated before, this whole matter along with the other practices and procedures of the RCMP will be the subject of an in-depth examination by the royal commission which was set up by this government.

**REASON FOR ALLEGED SURVEILLANCE OF TRADE UNION
LEADERS**

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I have never seen such a case of "there is nobody here but us chickens."

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Following the allegation that the intelligence unit of the Department of National Defence secured information by domestic surveillance and passed that information on to the security intelligence and analysis group under the minister's department, and this was disseminated to ministers of the Crown, I want to ask the minister about the statement which is quoted in this morning's paper with reference to the Minister of Labour who, when being informed of this alleged spying on trade unions, is quoted as having said "It doesn't surprise me. I do not think it