

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, having been caught receiving large sums of money for a potential wrong against their country, does the Prime Minister not agree that any arrangement whereby no prosecutions will take place for wrongdoers like these because they talked after they were caught is not in keeping with the best interests of this country? Indeed, I point out what happened yesterday in the United Kingdom, where a sentence of 21 years was imposed against a wrongdoer. These people do wrong and then adopt an escape method by assisting in revealing that in which they themselves were wrongly involved.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, it is my information that the circumstances of the case in the United Kingdom, to which my right hon. friend has referred, are not parallel to those which concern the Canadians he mentioned. However, I appreciate the seriousness of this matter, and in view of the fact that he has brought it up in this way I will be glad to look into it further and then make a considered reply.

Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer): I should like to ask a supplementary question. Can the Prime Minister tell us why this information was released to the press late on Saturday after most of the nation's newspapers had gone to press, and in view of the fact the two men involved had been expelled from the country some 12 to 18 hours previously.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, I will have to make an inquiry as to the timing of the release, but it is my impression that it was released on Saturday because it was about to leak if it had not been given at that time.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): I have a further supplementary question. In respect of the civil servant who is alleged to have been paid thousands of dollars to gather information and documents to assist in espionage by another country in Canada, has this money been recovered, or is the man who is allegedly responsible for gathering this information and selling these secrets to be allowed to go scot free?

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, I have just said that I will make a more detailed statement on that aspect of the case after I have obtained all the details.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, is the Prime Minister not in a position now to give the House some indication of the amount that was received; because certainly if the press release is accurate as to what took place, this is of a serious nature. If it was a small amount

involved one would be inclined to say that this fellow is a wrongdoer and that is all, because he was trying to help out. However, because of the size of the alleged payment this is a serious situation. I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether the identities of these individuals are to be available so we may know who those people are who would sell out their country in this way.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, I do not accept the statement in the form it is made by the right hon. gentleman. I have told him that I will obtain all the details relating to the points he has raised. I should also like to point out that in the statement issued on Saturday there is included this paragraph:

The approaches made by the two members of the Soviet Embassy very shortly came to the attention of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. As a result of this co-operation by conscientious Canadians, the Police were able to establish the improper intent of the Soviet approaches and to put an end to them before any damage was done to Canadian interests.

However, Mr. Speaker, I want to get all the information available before making a considered reply.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Prime Minister when he is obtaining the information to find out whether these individuals who accepted this money and who are described in the news release are conscientious Canadians.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, I cannot accept the statement the right hon. gentleman has made as reflecting on particular Canadians in a particular way. I reiterate that I will get the information which bears on these points and pass it on to the House, at which time perhaps my right hon. friend will be able to come to a more considered conclusion.

Mr. Diefenbaker: My opinion is a considered one now, if they did accept this money.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask the Prime Minister a supplementary question.

We have all read in the newspapers and heard on the radio the news report that two Russian spies have been sent back home after being well served by federal employees. Does the government intend to reveal the names of those federal employees? Moreover, would it not be in order now to use the satellite—

[Text]

—“Early Bird” to find those two civil service employees who had some acquaintance with the two Russian spies?