

Alert Service Correspondence with R.C.M.P.

of motions for the production of papers. He referred to the fact that particular individuals, perfectly innocent individuals, may well be prejudiced by putting on the public record correspondence to and from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police relating to them. We could even reach the point where statements about a particular individual, as one assumes happens very often, which are sent to the R.C.M.P. with malicious intent, are made public, and the individual may be entirely innocent of the charge or the allegation that is made. Subsequent investigation, as the minister pointed out in that particular case, may well indicate that there is no substance at all in the rumour. But if the production of that correspondence had been compelled in the house, we would have the situation where the individual would be prejudiced by having an allegation put on the public record, and no amount of denial could help to eradicate a certain amount of suspicion or a certain amount of prejudice—

Mr. Fisher: May I ask the parliamentary secretary a question? Did he not read an alleged statement by the deputy commissioner in charge of the branch which contained statements about a certain union? As a matter of fact, it is a union to which I believe the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Labour (Mr. Byrne) is proud to belong? Given a statement of this kind by the commissioner, given this kind of connection between the Alert Service and the R.C.M.P. which has been acknowledged by the R.C.M.P., what is likely to be so terrible in terms of general consequences about either answering the questions I put to the minister or letting me have the correspondence? Surely, there is a wrong being done the other way.

Mr. Macdonald: I do not think that follows at all. I have no reason to believe either that the statement was or that it was not accurate. I know there has from time to time been considerable criticism of, I believe it was, the Canadian intelligence service as well as the Alert Service, to which he has now made reference. I do not know whether that statement was accurate or not, but I think that statement would only be made by a responsible official such as the gentleman who is now in charge of the R.C.M.P., after full investigation of the validity of the facts upon which it is based. I suggest there is a broad distinction between a situation where the police have investigated a particular situation and established the validity of the facts, and the situation where some malicious individual may write in to the R.C.M.P. raising charges against a perfectly innocent individual and thereby causing prejudice to him.

I refer to the fact that it has been substantially accepted in this house for many years that the documentation and, in fact, the investigative activities of the police generally should not be gone into either by questions or the production of papers. I would refer hon. members to *Hansard* of April 28, 1952, at page 1646, in connection with a notice of motion for the production of papers brought by the former leader of the hon. gentleman, the former member for Rosetown-Biggart, Mr. Coldwell. This was a notice of motion by the hon. gentleman in connection with certain investigations which had been carried on by the R.C.M.P. under the Animal Contagious Diseases Act. The then minister of justice, the Hon. Stuart Garson took the position that it would be against the public interest to make public the particular documents required. He went on to say:

The reasons for the taking of this position will be obvious to anyone who gives the matter thought. Not only are the police investigators instructed to ascertain all the relevant facts, but they are encouraged to submit to their superior officers their own theories and their own hypotheses as to what interpretations might be drawn from these facts in further investigation into the matter. They are encouraged to suggest further lines of inquiry. They are encouraged, and indeed instructed, in the case of an investigation into a crime, to suggest in strictest confidence all those whom they regard as possible suspects, however slight may be their own reasons for suspecting these other persons, in order that their superior officers to whom these confidential reports are made may, by considering these confidential reports along with other confidential reports received from other investigating officers, draw conclusions as to what further investigations may be necessary, or even ultimate conclusions as to guilt and the identity of the guilty party or parties.

The various debates to which I have referred on this particular question make it abundantly clear that it could only have the effect of inhibiting the activities of the R.C.M.P. in the discharge of its legitimate police duty.

Mr. Fisher: That is what is being done.

Mr. Macdonald: The disclosure of this would not only have the effect of inhibiting this police function but it could also result in a prejudicial effect on particular individuals who might be referred to in correspondence of this type. It is for this reason I feel that all hon. members should oppose the passing of this motion and it is in this connection that I would suggest to the hon. gentleman that he might fall in line with precedents and withdraw his motion.

Mr. Fisher: I will withdraw the motion as soon as the parliamentary secretary gives me some answer that is satisfactory to the two questions I raised, the two possible questions.