

*Privilege—Mr. Stanfield*

told us that in 1975, for example, the government had instructed the security forces to discontinue surveillance of legitimate political parties in the country. I presume the Prime Minister made that statement to the House because he recognized that this is a matter of fundamental concern to members of this House. I submit in all seriousness that it is a breach of the privileges of this House for the Solicitor General, the chief minister responsible in this area of government in stating government policy, to tell me, as the member for Halifax, that it is none of my business, that this concerns security and it is not the business of any member of this House as to what kind of surveillance is exercised on candidates for this House.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

● (1512)

**Mr. Stanfield:** I emphasize again, so there will be no confusion, that I am not disputing the right of the minister in the question period to refuse to answer my questions. He went far beyond that, I submit. If Your Honour believes I have a *prima facie* question of privilege, I will at the first opportunity submit a motion to this effect.

**Hon. J.-J. Blais (Solicitor General):** Mr. Speaker, the document to which the hon. member refers, was, as he well knows, the subject of a newspaper report this morning. I like the hon. gentleman and I would like him to be assured that it is my preoccupation and main concern to ensure there is never any breach of the privileges of any of the members of this House.

I would indicate to the hon. member that it is well recognized in matters affecting national security, and the operations of the security service are one of the areas affecting national security, that those matters are not made public in the House. That is the reason why the government, by order in council, created the McDonald inquiry. That inquiry is reviewing the procedures of the security service of the RCMP.

That has been the practice not only in this House and in Canada, but in all jurisdictions that owe their traditions to the Mother of Parliaments in Great Britain. When we are dealing with an article relating to documents that could well involve matters of national security, I suggest to the hon. member that the proper course of action is to keep those matters in confidence. If those matters need examination, then they are being examined now by the McDonald inquiry.

Relating to the surveillance of members of this House, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has written to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark), and the same evidence has been made available to the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent), to the effect that there is not surveillance of the members of this House and there has not been while he has been Prime Minister of Canada.

Relating to the surveillance of the legitimate political parties, I replied to the hon. member very specifically to a specific inquiry, indicating that the Prime Minister had issued directives and that the security service of Canada is abiding by those directives.

[Mr. Stanfield.]

In terms of surveillance of individuals who may be acting contrary to Section 16(2) of the Official Secrets Act, a section passed by this House, that is a matter of proper investigation by the security service of this country.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Leggatt) seeks the floor on a separate question of privilege. The hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin).

**Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood):** Mr. Speaker, I want to say that we feel the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Stanfield) has made a most important and valuable point, and that the privileges of this House are indeed concerned with the matter that he has raised.

First, it is said that because the McDonald Commission is making inquiries, the result of these inquiries may be postponed from month after month, that somehow or other that diminishes the powers of this House. I deny that proposition. This House is the supreme court of the land. There is no way in which the rights and privileges of this parliament can be curtailed merely by reason of the fact that some other tribunal is inquiring into some aspects of the fact.

We go from there to the same old thing which we have heard again and again, namely, reference to national security. If there are documents that throw light upon whether the members of this House are or have been subjected to surveillance, then no question of national security arises with regard to that matter. This is a matter which mainly affects the members of this House. I think we are entitled to the fullest answers from the minister. Let him give up these weak-kneed, foolish, misleading, and thoroughly unsound suggestions that, because it affects national security, this House is not to get the information to which it is clearly entitled.

**Mr. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to continue briefly on the same question of privilege, further to the remarks of the hon. member who has just spoken.

The Solicitor General (Mr. Blais) in dealing with this general question ought to say to this House whether he in fact is satisfied with the attitudes and truthfulness of some of the top officials of the RCMP on whom he has to depend for information, which in turn he has to give to the House. I say this in view of the answer given by Superintendent J. P. Nowlan to counsel named Bruno Pateras when he was questioning an operation which he considered typical of illegal activities. He asked Superintendent Nowlan, "To what limit will you go, if there is a limit, in giving information that is false?" Superintendent Nowlan said, if this newspaper report is correct, that "it depended on the situation."

The Solicitor General owes the House a clear and definitive statement as to what length he will go before he will take action, keeping in mind what the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin) has said about the tendency to put all the responsibility on the McDonald Royal Commission. The Solicitor General should definitively say if there is a point to what limit he will go in apologizing, covering up, or condoning