

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

**Mr. Macdonald:** I am not raising that question at all; I am merely replying to the question raised by my hon. friend from Royal. I would point out that to allow this particular motion to pass, and to recognize the right of an hon. member to compel the government, on behalf of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, to disclose the particular correspondence which it may have with an individual, or further information that may come to it from whatever source—whatever the nature of that source, as I said before—would inhibit the police in carrying out their obligations.

I would like to refer more particularly to that matter. I think the first and most obvious reason why this should not be done is that if it became public knowledge—and it soon would—that information of this kind could be compelled to be produced in this chamber, such information might very well be cut off from sources anonymous, and from named people who write, thinking they are dealing in confidence with the R.C.M.P. Then the general conclusion would have to be that the information could not be supplied to the R.C.M.P. in this way. This very valuable source of information in carrying out their duties would be cut off.

**Mr. Fisher:** Mr. Speaker, I hate to interrupt the hon. member, but I ask him another question. He is not assuming I am interested in the information that comes from the Alert Service to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, is he? If he is, I would like to make it very clear to him that my intention is to get the information that has gone from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to the Alert Service; that is all. I do not care what came back from the Alert Service; I want to know whether the Royal Canadian Mounted Police gave anything to the Alert Service. So there is no question, really, of there being interference with the information that may be coming to the R.C.M.P.

**Mr. Macdonald:** I would not accept the distinction which the hon. member is trying to draw. He says, "I only want one side of the correspondence". I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that while this would perhaps not be as revealing as submitting all the correspondence, it certainly would have the inhibiting effect to which I referred earlier. If one were to make available by way of notice of motion for the production of papers particular information which might be referred to in correspondence coming back from the force to the particular individual, it would be entirely possible for as much damage to be done as if the whole correspondence was revealed.

I would point out that it has been established for a long time in this house that correspondence or proceedings of the Royal

Canadian Mounted Police in connection with investigations—and investigations in this case would include particular investigations and correspondence they might have in their general investigative function—are privileged and should not be revealed either in answer to questions or in response to notices of motions for the production of papers.

I would refer the house to a number of citations in *Hansard* where this question has been raised and the privilege has been recognized. In 1939, in *Hansard* at page 1669, the Hon. Ernest Lapointe, the then minister of justice, revealed that certain charges which had been made had been further investigated, but he refused to disclose any further information as to the nature of those investigations or what was revealed, in view of the fact that it would be contrary to the public interest to do so. If I might, Mr. Speaker, I would refer particularly to a statement made in this house by the former minister of justice, the former hon. member for Kamloops who was replying to a colleague of the hon. member for Port Arthur (Mr. Fisher), namely the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard). This will be found in *Hansard* for July 8, 1958, at page 2047. The question raised by the hon. member was as follows:

Does the R.C.M.P. maintain any files or dossiers on members of parliament?

The second part of the question was:

If so, upon which members of the present parliament are such files or dossiers maintained?

The reply of the minister of justice at that time was as follows:

All Royal Canadian Mounted Police files on individuals are confidential and many are secret. One of the primary duties of all those responsible for such files is to respect and preserve the confidential or secret nature of their contents.

It will be appreciated also that a large number of such files are started by reports, statements or knowledge of activities coming to the attention of responsible members of the police which they are bound to investigate in the course of their duties. The follow-up on such reports in many cases reveals no necessity for further action, yet there is still a file. This means that many files will be in existence under the names of individuals against whom there is nothing of a substantial, let alone a criminal, nature.

I would point out that what the former minister of justice said on that occasion applied directly to the contents of those files, namely the correspondence both to and from the R.C.M.P., which may have related to allegations about individuals, allegations about organizations, or information generally which may have been of assistance to the police in their investigative activities. The minister of justice at that time pointed out a second and, I would submit, substantial reason why information of this kind could not be made available in the house on notices