

Inquiries of the Ministry

found to be the duty of Government in certain of these cases either to release part of the information or not to release any information at all. One instance was quoted *inter alia* yesterday with respect to the previous government—and I have no quarrel with them in this respect—having refused even the suggestion of the R.C.M.P. to publicize one such instance. So in the circumstances I think it is not only proper for me not to volunteer information on the spur of the moment, but it is my duty to consider fully the advisability of doing it or not.

Mr. Douglas: When the Minister is considering this matter will he also consider giving information to the House as to when he communicated the situation with respect to this espionage case to the Prime Minister?

Mr. Favreau: Subject to my answer, Mr. Speaker, I will.

[*Later:*]

[*Translation*]

Hon. Paul Martineau (Pontiac-Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a supplementary question to the Minister of Justice.

In view of the reply he has just given and of the necessity of dealing with this matter confidentially, would the government consider the advisability of holding a meeting behind closed doors, so as to provide members of the house with all the information they are entitled to obtain?

[*Text*]

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, this, of course, would be a very unusual occasion if we had an in camera sitting for a matter of this kind. I do not need to tell the House that security investigations are going on continually, unfortunately; and as my colleague the Minister of Justice has said, some are made public and the results are made public, but others are not.

It was considered on this occasion, on the advice of the security authorities, to give maximum publicity to the incident in question. I would be very happy, as I said yesterday, to meet the leaders of the various parties and give them information which it would be appropriate to give them but which it would not be appropriate to give to the full House of Commons in the circumstances.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): If I might speak, Mr. Speaker, I do not think the Prime Minister, if he thinks over what he has said, has any

right to do that. He can only transmit secret information to those who are of the Privy Council, and for leaders of parties to get this information is quite outside the ambit of the rights of Parliament. There is no doubt about that, is there—that secret information or anything of that nature cannot be passed on to anyone but a Member of the Privy Council?

Mr. Pearson: I do not know whether I can accept what the right hon. gentleman has suggested as being in fact the constitutional practice. Of course a Privy Councillor is subject to the Privy Councillor's oath. But there have been occasions in the past, I am quite sure—indeed, I know—when the Prime Minister considered it desirable to consult leaders of other parties as well as the Leader of the Opposition and, indeed, the Leader of the Opposition when he was not a Member of the Privy Council, in respect of matters which were confidential.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Let me say immediately that at no time when I was Prime Minister did I consult with any private Member—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Diefenbaker:—did I consult with any Members of Parliament not Privy Councillors and give them such knowledge. And, may I add, in view of the applause which greeted the first part of my remarks, there was not the same attitude in those days of no communication between Ministers as has been evident in connection with recent cases.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer): My question is related to the topic we have been discussing and also to the question I asked yesterday. Can the Prime Minister inform the House whether there is an orientation course for civil servants designed to acquaint them with the techniques of subversion, the likely areas of interest and the methods used by subversives for exploring and penetrating those areas of interest? If not, does the Government not think it advisable that information similar to that published by the British Government in its handbook for all government employees entitled "Their Trade is Treachery" should be made available widely and immediately within the Canadian Government service both at home and abroad?

Mr. Pearson: That question is being considered, but I would inform the hon. Member at once that there is, of course, a security