

and I presume for all members of this House, is to believe that documents dated 1971 and 1972 may have been destroyed in the normal course of events, when subsequent documents of exactly the same nature, dated 1973 and 1974, were not destroyed but were adduced as evidence before the McDonald Commission. If I am not mistaken that evidence was adduced by Assistant Commissioner Venner. On the basis of the answers given today by the Solicitor General it is very difficult to understand whether documents dated 1971 and 1972 might have been destroyed in the normal course of events but subsequent documents of exactly the same nature were not.

I cannot stress too much the importance of these documents. The documents relate directly to the basis of knowledge of the then solicitor general about electronic surveillance activities. I did not say that it related to security service surveillance, not at all. I did not mention the words security services in any of my questions that I am aware of, but it is extremely important when one realizes the nature of the documents.

It is a monthly report to the Solicitor General which presumably he must initial receipt of, and presumably he may make notations on it instructing members of the RCMP as to his wishes with respect to this important part of law enforcement activities. The report goes directly to the Solicitor General of the day. Presumably instructions or notations may be added by the Solicitor General to those monthly documents. It goes to the very heart of the Solicitor General's knowledge of activities of the day. It has nothing to do with the infringement upon the rights of the McDonald Commission in the normal course of their inquiry. It is also inconceivable—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member has made the point that the Solicitor General (Mr. Blais) may have misled the House during the course of his response to questions. That was the purpose for which he was given the floor. I do not want to restrict him unduly, but I do not think he ought to go on to argue the importance of the question.

Mr. Jarvis: Mr. Speaker, I apologize if I have infringed upon you. The destruction of documents is the issue upon which I raised my question of privilege. May I reserve my right to make the appropriate motion once I have had a chance to check the record, which is not available to me as yet? I think the important answer was the answer to the first question I put to the Solicitor General at the start of the question period today.

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, on that point I simply indicate to the hon. gentleman that I did point out subsequently that in the event that I did say they had been destroyed in categorical fashion, perhaps that could have been misleading to the hon. gentleman. I did correct that, Mr. Speaker, by indicating that I presumed they had been destroyed because that was the current procedure being followed within the RCMP, and that documents older than three years may have been destroyed. However, in order to answer the hon. gentleman, I would be pleased to check and find out if the documents might in some way be mislaid. I indicated to

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the hon. gentleman that the matter came to my attention this morning in the same way that it did to him.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean-Pierre Goyer (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a point and I would like to make it clear for all hon. members. It regards some reports concerning electronic surveillance that may have been submitted to me by the RCMP. Those reports have never been in my files, have never been stored in my filing cabinets, have always remained in the hands of the RCMP. And if such reports have been destroyed, I have never given instructions to that effect and I have not been involved in their destruction.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Perth-Wilmot (Mr. Jarvis) raised by way of a question of privilege answers which may have been misleading in some way to the House. That was the gist of his question of privilege. He requested an opportunity to examine the record to determine that. The Solicitor General has indicated in response that he will re-examine the problem to see if there is any matter which needs to be further clarified. This issue will remain in abeyance until those two steps have been taken.

MR. STANFIELD—SURVEILLANCE OF CANDIDATES SEEKING PUBLIC OFFICE

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, I would like to raise a question of privilege. This afternoon I raised questions with the Solicitor General (Mr. Blais) which I think touch on matters of fundamental concern to members of this House respecting possible surveillance of candidates for election to this House as well as to other political offices in the country, on grounds which are admittedly set forth in a document.

I do not question and I do not rise in my place, after being in this House for ten years, to dispute the right of the Solicitor General to refuse to answer a question. I am not arguing that ordinarily he must answer my question. My question of privilege is that he did not simply refuse to answer the question, but that he took the position that this matter was in the hands of the McDonald Commission and will be dealt with, as I understood him, perhaps secretly. I took it that he was telling me that there was no way in which the Government of Canada would give me the information I was seeking as to whether these instructions have gone out, or whether members or candidates for election to this House are in fact subjected to this kind of surveillance under the very loose and broad terms as set forth in this document.

I suggest to you, sir, that it is a violation of the privileges of this House for a minister of the government not simply to say that he is not going to answer that question but for him to say that this is the business of the McDonald Commission and that this is really none of the business of members of this House.

I do not wish to take more time, but it is a matter about which I feel most strongly. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau)