

Oral Questions

existence. Therefore, the McDonald inquiry is not at all hindered in its investigation.

To make it precise once more, there was a process whereby certain installations were reported on a monthly basis. The reports which referred to the original installations were destroyed in accordance with administration policy. However, the records relating to the specific installations were not destroyed and are still available.

Mr. Jarvis: Mr. Speaker, on one hand we have uncontradicted allegations that 58 copies of a document marked "Top Secret. For Canadian eyes only" were distributed all over Parliament Hill, the national capital, and likely to foreign countries as well. On the other hand, we now have evidence from the Solicitor General that this particular series of reports covering two years was destroyed according to normal procedures.

Is the Solicitor General telling us that the reports prepared monthly for the Solicitor General were prepared in one copy only; that that copy has now been destroyed and that no other copies were maintained of what presumably was an extremely important monthly report to the chief law enforcement officer of the Crown?

● (1417)

Mr. Blais: Again, Mr. Speaker, the report related to specific installations. The records of those installations are still available. As I understand it, they have been used by counsel in the preparation of evidence to be laid before the inquiry. I do not see what the hon. gentleman's point is at all.

Mr. Jarvis: The issue is one of credibility. Surely the Solicitor General must understand how it tests one's credibility to learn that the missing or destroyed reports cover exactly the period of time during which the present Minister of Supply and Services was solicitor general and cover exactly the period during which activities took place which formed the main subject matter of the McDonald commission hearings.

Will the hon. gentleman be precise in telling us when the destruction of those documents took place, and under whose authority, and when did their destruction first come to his notice or to the notice of his predecessor?

Mr. Blais: First of all, if you recall, initially when I commenced my reply I said we were dealing with criminal investigation branch reports; we were not dealing with national security. The reports which were submitted to the Solicitor General in relation to national security are still available. I am dealing now with reports relating to installations and involving electronic surveillance, which have nothing at all to do with the security service. Therefore, the allegation advanced by the hon. gentleman does not hold water.

RCMP SURVEILLANCE OF POLITICAL CANDIDATES

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Halifax): Knowing what an eager beaver the Solicitor General is, I am sure he has already

checked out the accuracy of a report with regard to documents purported to be copies of RCMP instructions to certain personnel relating to the surveillance of political candidates. Can the Solicitor General tell us whether the document is a valid copy and, if so, whether those instructions were modified in any way by the instructions the government issued, I think it was in 1975, telling the RCMP and the security force to stop exercising surveillance over political parties; or is the instruction relating to the surveillance of political candidates still in place?

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Solicitor General): I thank the hon. gentleman for the compliment he has paid me. In accordance with his evaluation of my activities, I have indeed ascertained certain facts. I want to say to the hon. gentleman, because I think this is the first question he has asked in the House in relation to the McDonald inquiry for some time, that he is well aware of the terms of reference of that commission and one of the terms of reference is to study all procedures within the RCMP.

He will be the first to recognize that the manuals are essential in the study of those procedures. As a consequence the manuals of the RCMP, past and current, have been made available to the McDonald inquiry. In terms of the contents of the manuals, I would call the hon. gentleman's attention to the fact that under the terms of reference of the inquiry certain hearings are to be held in camera to protect the security service and our national security. In terms of methodology or procedures which affect investigations related to national security, those hearings are to be held in camera and it would not be proper at this time to comment as to the accuracy of the contents.

● (1422)

Mr. Stanfield: With all due respect to the Solicitor General, whom I know is not only an eager beaver but also a great democrat in his heart, would he not agree that it is of fundamental interest to hon. members of this House to know whether the RCMP were exercising surveillance over political candidates in the manner indicated in this report, and also of fundamental interest to us to know whether this has continued since the government's instructions to the RCMP to discontinue the surveillance of political parties, because they are not the same thing? Is it too much for me to insist on a straight answer from my friend the Solicitor General?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman and hon. members of his party who have been briefed on security service operations know that because an individual belongs to an organization, whatever organization it may be, that does not make that individual impervious to investigation or surveillance by the security service, because the criterion relating to the exercise of surveillance or investigation is conduct which goes against the provisions of section 16(2) of the Official Secrets Act. The security service is indeed charged with effecting surveillance of individuals who could be a threat or