

Supply—Justice

A wrong or hasty or ill-informed conclusion may result in a serious loss of vital information. It may result in a Canadian government employee, his family or his friends, being subjected to intolerable pressures, even though none of them may be seriously at fault and the ruination of careers and reputations through the actions of unfriendly intelligence services. On the other hand, it may result in an able, loyal and trustworthy Canadian being denied an opportunity to serve his country in a position or calling of his own choice. These are some of the possible consequences of an unwise or incorrect decision. It is because the consequences can be so serious that the government has decided to introduce changes such as the Prime Minister referred to earlier. These are changes designed to make more certain that the individual has every opportunity consistent with security itself to give his side of the case. This he did not have an opportunity to do before. Now, he will have this opportunity, not once but twice. He will be assured in future of a chance to present all considerations to the permanent head of his department or agency personally. After that, to be sure that no point has been missed and no misinterpretation given, a board of review drawn from the security panel will re-examine the case. In the last analysis, however, the decision whether to recommend dismissal will be that of the responsible minister.

The new and carefully devised procedures will improve our measures and give a new assurance to individual employees. They will not, however, mean that dismissals will not be necessary in some cases in the future as in the past. When they are necessary, however, every attempt will be made to treat problems of unsuitability on grounds of security or reliability in the same way as other problems of personnel management are treated. Departments will do their best to hold in strict confidence the information they get concerning individuals, and to take any action necessary in a way that does the least possible damage to reputations and self-respect.

I said a moment ago that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police had been charged with the responsibility of keeping the government informed about subversive activity in Canada. As is well known, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police also carry out, on behalf of the departments and agencies of government, the majority of the background investigations I have referred to of present or prospective government employees who are being considered for appointment to sensitive positions. In performing both of these tasks, the police have been subjected at times to public criticism. Some of this criticism has sprung from the university communities in Canada, who

have expressed concern over a variety of matters pertaining to security, particularly that our security measures should in no way interfere with the freedom of thought and discussion which is essential to the very purpose of any institution of learning. The government wholeheartedly agrees with this view. In the late summer, the Prime Minister and I had occasion to discuss some of these matters with officials of the Canadian association of university teachers. Those discussions, I believe, contributed to a clearer understanding of the issues involved, and I trust that the statements the Prime Minister and I have made will further add to a better understanding on the part of all interested organizations and individuals of the nature of our security measures and of the reasons for them.

In closing, sir, may I re-emphasize one point? In carrying out their investigative and fact-finding functions in this difficult field, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police do not act upon their own initiative but rather upon instructions from the government of Canada. As a police force in a democratic country, and indeed one of the finest forces in the world, they are at all times accountable, both by law and by tradition, to the government of Canada and through it to this parliament and the people of Canada. They will undoubtedly be criticized in the future, as they have been in the past, for carrying out policies and instructions that the government of the day lays down, within the laws of Canada, as being necessary in the public interest. Mistakes may be made in the future as they have been made in the past. I am certain, however, that so long as these matters are open to public scrutiny and free discussion, we need have no undue concern that essential security measures can deviate far or for long from the principles that are essential to a free and democratic nation. I am equally certain that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in this, as in other tasks that fall upon them, will do no more than carry out honourably and conscientiously the responsibilities that the government and people of Canada place in their trust.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Chairman, the matter under discussion is one of the most difficult problems that faces a government today. It is understandable why the Prime Minister should have made a statement this evening as to the policy of the government, for the responsibility of national security rests primarily on the Prime Minister. In discharging that responsibility, he has the benefit of the assistance of the Minister of Justice and the other agencies connected with that department. I found it somewhat difficult to understand the necessity for the detail into which the Minister of Justice went. Certainly, that