

*Supply—Justice*

the quantity. For example, how many inoperative files are there on members of parliament? That is the sort of question I have in mind. Would that be possible?

**Mr. Fulton:** It is difficult to generalize because when you generalize you give an answer without realizing its implications. I think the approach would be that such information as could be given without contravening grounds of public policy would be given and should be given, but just where the line should be drawn I am not able to say at the moment. For instance, if you answer one question, then at what point do you refuse to answer the next question? There is some danger that if you start to answer any questions in this particular field you may open a door by which you may be forced into apparent inconsistencies in subsequent refusals or else into going all the way and revealing information which might be neither in the public interest nor in the interest of the individual concerned.

All I can say there is what I said at the beginning, that whatever information can be given safely in accordance with sound policy should be given. There are restrictions against making all information known in the form of a public return. There are fewer restrictions against making it known on a confidential basis where you are satisfied as to the legitimacy of the interest of the person inquiring and of his capacity, as would be the case almost without question with members of parliament, to maintain the confidentiality with which he received the information.

**Mr. Peters:** Now that the government has changed, does the minister see much point in maintaining this Canadian investigation branch to investigate political probabilities? Does he see any point in maintaining the division or is he prepared to indicate whether he might be considering disposing of some of these files? I think it would hinge on whether the purpose of maintaining the file was to build up a case or whether it involved national security and citizenship matters. Has the minister given any consideration to the elimination of the part of this branch that appears to me to be detrimental to our Canadian way of life?

If there appeared to be anything that contravened Canadian law in a criminal or other sense then I would agree completely that such files should be maintained and used for reference purposes, presenting a case in court or whatever other reason might arise. However, if these files are just being maintained more or less in case somebody may need them some day, then I do not see

any reason for doing so. I think the minister will agree that many of these files were initiated originally under governments of days gone by and that it might be quite proper to dispose of them if they are not serving any particular purpose.

**Mr. Fulton:** I am informed by the commissioner that they strip the files as and when they can. When a file is definitely inoperative or dead it would be disposed of but it is a problem as to how much of your time and effort you devote to stripping files and how much you devote to carrying on the police work for which the force is responsible. However, I understand it is not the case that a file once opened is kept forever. If the case comes to a dead end, if it becomes obvious that the purpose for which the investigation was first opened is no longer a real purpose, then the file is closed, and as I understand it it will be disposed of at the first reasonable opportunity so that no one will ever know about it.

On the question of whether we should dispense with the work of that section of the force, I cannot agree that it does not perform a very useful, valuable and important function. As I said earlier, it seems to me that the problem and the objectives should be rather to make sure that the function is performed efficiently and thoroughly and that the interest of the public and of individuals is safeguarded by the secrecy and confidentiality of the information so that it is never put to an improper purpose. It seems to me that is what the objective should be.

**Mr. Ellis:** For my own information I wonder whether the minister could tell the committee at whose instigation an investigation is commenced. For example, I am thinking of an employer desiring an investigation of an employee. Could he under certain circumstances make representations to the R.C.M.P. to initiate an investigation?

**Mr. Fulton:** I understand that investigation could not be made unless it was in connection with a defence contract; that is to say in the ordinary course of employer and employee relationships no private employer could come along and say "I want my employee investigated". He could not do that through the R.C.M.P.

**Mr. Ellis:** Generally speaking, on whose authority is it done or who gives instructions to the R.C.M.P. to undertake the investigation of a particular individual.

**Mr. Fulton:** I think the hon. gentleman must mean in the sense of an employee in a