

fact, the documents were destroyed, when they were destroyed, and under whose authority?

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, the documents are presumed to have been destroyed. There is no precise date indicated as to the time of destruction.

Mr. Jarvis: Mr. Speaker, therefore, I presume no certificate of destruction has been found. Yesterday the Solicitor General indicated that this was a matter of routine procedure—which in itself is alarming enough—wherein documents may be destroyed after a three-year period.

Can the Solicitor General explain, under these routine procedures, why documents would be destroyed for these very vital two years, yet documents for 1973, 1974 and part of 1975—which are now three years old—are so readily available to the McDonald commission?

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the hon. gentleman, the source documents referred to in the reports are still available and, indeed, are available to the McDonald commission. In terms of the procedures which were followed, yes, they were internal procedures. There were directives issued relating to this type of report, that the destruction ought to take place three years next after the date of the document. The three years have expired. I understand the directives were fairly explicit.

With reference to the documents after 1973, the documents are available because, indeed, the question of the McDonald commission came up within the time; otherwise their destruction might have been ordered.

Mr. Jarvis: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Solicitor General indicated—and I believe he has implied it today—that the McDonald commission would not be at all hindered by lack of availability of these documents, in that supporting documentary material is apparently still available. Assistant commissioner Venner said that the records show the government was fully informed as to electronic surveillance by means of these monthly reports.

For this crucial two-year period wherein those missing documents would have shown the degree of ministerial knowledge by the then solicitor general, is the present Solicitor General now telling us that supporting material is still available to the McDonald commission to enable that commission to know the degree of ministerial knowledge during that crucial two-year period?

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, we are dealing here with a document or report referring to the criminal side, or the criminal investigation side. We are not dealing with material relating to the security service side. Therefore, when we are dealing with the reports, the information contained therein which is presently available to the McDonald commission is satisfactory for all the commission's needs.

Oral Questions

MEANING OF "GOVERNMENT REQUIREMENTS" IN RCMP INSTRUCTIONS

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Solicitor General. With respect to the apparent instructions issued by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in 1971, about which I questioned the minister yesterday without much success, can the minister tell me what was meant in the instructions which indicated that the request for reporting was not so much for security reasons as it was for statistical purposes, including "government requirements"? Since this could not possibly have anything to do with security, can the minister indicate what was meant by "government requirements" in those instructions?

● (1432)

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, with reference to yesterday's questions, the hon. gentleman will recall that I did not want to comment specifically on the document that was referred to. The method which is employed in terms of collecting certain information follows the collection of statistical information that is generally available relating to all candidates in any given election. That information is then compared to files that are within the security service relating to their own responsibilities and discharging those responsibilities relating to national security, in the terms that I described yesterday. As I understand it, that is the significance of the terms that the hon. gentleman has advanced.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, it is a little difficult to accept the explanation if this is what is meant by "government requirements". Some months ago the Prime Minister indicated that following the invocation of the War Measures Act the government requested the security forces to increase their interest in what he referred to as internal subversion, but the Prime Minister has never met my request to tell us precisely what the government's instructions were.

Could there be any connection between the instructions given to the RCM Police by the Prime Minister and members of the government following the October crisis and the reference to "government requirements" in the instructions issued in 1971 by the RCM Police?

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman addressed himself yesterday to the question of directives that might have been issued by the Prime Minister relating to the question of surveillance of organized parties. The hon. gentleman was informed by me that, indeed, in 1975 specific instructions were issued relating to surveillance of political parties, and those instructions were that the surveillance ought not to take place.

With reference to the hon. gentleman's question, the Prime Minister was asked a question of similar nature some time in the past and made a very fulsome response to it.