

has had of reading the comments of the Solicitor General. I can restate the policy of this government, as I did just a few days ago, and maybe that will satisfy the hon. member. The RCMP have no authority or mandate to investigate political parties as such, neither his party nor mine, nor any other provincial party. When evidence comes to the police that there has been purloining of confidential documents, whether by a political party, by an individual or by the hon. member himself, I think it is their duty to try to stop such practices and ensure respect for the property of the federal government. Therefore, if in doing that, they have to investigate political people, I think they will just do their duty and do so.

Mr. Lawrence: Madam Speaker, before I address my supplementary question to the Solicitor General, I must say to the Prime Minister that simply because some clerk in the Privy Council office happens to stamp a political document confidential that is not going to stop anyone else, Official Secrets Act or not, from attempting to get something which should be legitimately in the public realm, and that includes the hon. member for Durham-Northumberland as well.

INSTRUCTIONS ISSUED TO SECURITY SERVICE

Hon. Allan Lawrence (Durham-Northumberland): Madam Speaker, my supplementary is for the Solicitor General. What instructions, if any, has he issued to the security service—not just the RCMP in general, but to the security service—which is being utilized in these investigations, to make sure that there are some guidelines, some parameters, or some definition about political information for them to follow?

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General): Madam Speaker, I have not issued any new instructions because the instructions have been long standing. They are as follows. In the course of a legitimate investigation under the mandate of the security service, it often happens, I understand, that unrelated information comes to the attention of the security service. I have indicated that political information of the sort I described in that article is not brought to the attention of the government, and that it is the security service itself which makes that decision.

The recommendation of the McDonald Commission on that subject was precisely that, that the government, and ministers in particular, should not be given that kind of political spill-over information. The McDonald Commission described the existing situation, which is rigorous, and that is the situation that will continue.

It is always inevitable that if a legitimate investigation is being conducted by the security service, spill-over information will be included in it and will come to the attention of the security service. Their responsibility is to act as a screen, and to protect the privacy of individuals and to protect the political secrets and objectives, if you like, of their targets that are not related to the national security. That they have done, and that they will continue to do.

Oral Questions

HOUSE OF COMMONS

DURATION OF CHRISTMAS RECESS

Hon. George Hees (Northumberland): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. In view of the fact that there are a great many matters that are of tremendous importance to the country which must be dealt with immediately by Parliament for the country's good, will the Prime Minister advise the House and the country why it is that this House is to be in recess for a full five weeks instead of being recalled on Monday, January 4, to deal as quickly as possible with revisions that are vitally necessary to the budget, and also with the economy which is sliding steadily into recession every day?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I am somewhat puzzled by the hon. member. He is making a suggestion which contradicts the motion which was supported by his own party and, I believe, by the hon. member himself, to have an agreed adjournment date to January 25. I imagine if the hon. member voted for that, either silently or vociferously, it is because he has plans to go skiing at that time.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

REASON FOR LENGTH OF RECESS

Hon. George Hees (Northumberland): Madam Speaker, I can assure the Prime Minister that I am not planning to go skiing and, if Parliament is recalled on January 4, I will be here, as I hope he will.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hees: As the Prime Minister has not made any attempt to give an answer to a very important question, and is quite happy to see Parliament recessed for a full five weeks, when it should be sitting for the last three of those five weeks, will he not admit that the real reason Parliament being recessed until January 25 is the fact that the government is trying to avoid, for as long as possible, the embarrassing questions which the opposition puts to it every day on the worst budget that has been presented to this country for more than 30 years, and on the great harm that is being done to the economy of this country by that simply terrible budget?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I am sure the hon. member has not forgotten that after the last budget put forth by his party there was a long recess, too.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!