

RCMP SECURITY FILES

Question No. 3,765—**Mr. Cossitt:**

1. Is there an RCMP security file on the Prime Minister and, if so, during the transfer from RCMP security to the new civilian Security Service, will it be destroyed, altered or changed in any way?

2. With reference to the answer to question No. 3,230 which declares that the government will not guarantee that security files will not be destroyed, altered or changed in any way, is the reason for this policy because of the existence of a file on the Prime Minister?

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General): 1. The Security Service properly maintains files on a number of persons which it must do in order to carry out its responsibilities to national security. The mere existence of a file does not, however, necessarily connote improper activity on the part of a file subject. In effect, Security Service files are held without prejudice and in the strictest confidence. To do otherwise would be a disservice to many local law-abiding Canadians and, for this reason, it has been the long-standing policy of the Security Service to neither confirm nor deny the existence of a file on any individual.

The McDonald commission of inquiry recommended that the individual file holdings of the Security Service be reduced. I have instructed a review of the current Security Service file retention policy with this objective in mind but not at the expense of affecting Canada's ability to conduct proper national security investigations. I can assure this House that no Security Service file will be destroyed, altered or changed in any way simply because of the prominence or otherwise of the individual involved.

2. No.

[English]

Mr. Smith: I ask, Madam Speaker, that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

Madam Speaker: The questions enumerated by the parliamentary secretary have been answered. Shall the remaining questions be allowed to stand?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

NATIONAL ENERGY BOARD ACT (NO. 3)

MEASURE TO AMEND

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources) moved that Bill C-108, to amend the National Energy Board Act (No. 3), be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Energy Legislation.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak today to hon. members of this House on a few important aspects of Bill C-108, to amend the National Energy Board Act (No. 3), which we are currently debating. As you know,

National Energy Board Act (No. 3)

the National Energy Board is one of the main instruments that the Government of Canada has for bringing influence to bear on energy development in our country. The board, in fact, regulates certain activities and operations of companies or individuals wanting to promote that development. Your Honour also knows that this bill to amend the National Energy Board Act (No. 3) is one of the necessary legislative measures for implementing the essential elements of the National Energy Program, which is the framework on which our whole energy future will be built.

The aim of the National Energy Program is to provide a new impetus, a vital thrust, to Canadian energy development as a whole. Its objectives are fairness, security and participation, which are essential to Canada for its economic development and for its freedom of action on the international scene. It is therefore to be expected that the act which serves as the vehicle for achieving some of these objectives will improve and fine tune the federal government's principal instrument in the energy field, namely, the jurisdiction and powers of the National Energy Board.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to deal more specifically with Clauses 12 and 30 of Bill C-108 which give additional powers to the National Energy Board with respect to international and interprovincial power lines. In doing so, I am thinking especially of the citizens of my own province, the province of Quebec, for whom these provisions have raised a number of questions, leading to an often stormy debate. There have been many erroneous statements on this subject, and today I wish to take this opportunity in the House to clarify the situation. Before explaining the nature of the bill, I would like to spend a few minutes on some technical explanations. Up to about ten years ago, transmission of electricity over long distances was very difficult. Alternating current was used, and to keep the voltage in the lines constant, many relays were needed along the entire transmission route. Since construction and operation of these relays was expensive, it was often found preferable to build power lines over short distances, either between two points in the same province or between two points in neighbouring provinces that were close enough. At the time there was no particular urgency for having special regulations for long international or interprovincial power lines.

In the last ten or 15 years, however, power transmission technology has made tremendous progress. It became possible to transmit very high voltage electricity using direct current instead of alternating current, so that relays were no longer necessary. Some of the most important technological advances in this area took place here in Canada and more specifically in Quebec and Manitoba, two provinces that have developed highly advanced technology for the transmission of electric power over long distances. It is now feasible to transmit electric power over very long distances and, today electric