

international news

EARLY last year, the revelation that Canada's National Research Council (NRC) had for many years served as a cover for the secret gathering of intelligence shocked many Canadians. It also led the then leader of the New Democratic Party, David Lewis, to propose shifting the NRC unit concerned (the so-called Communications Branch) into a more appropriate department, and Prime Minister Trudeau to promise that he would consider the suggestion.

A few weeks ago, the Canadian public learned that the question had indeed been considered: in fact the Communications Branch had been transferred to the Department of National Defence. The information came out in questioning of the Minister of State for Science and Technology, C. M. Drury, in the House of Commons.

But the matter didn't rest there. Questioning of Mr Drury (who, as it happens, is a former president of the Treasury Board) revealed that the budget of the branch could not be identified separately in the estimates, but instead was spread about in such a way as to make it impossible for MPs to find out how much had been spent

More about spying and the NRC

from David Spurgeon, Ottawa

on this sophisticated form of spying (the branch monitors electronics data signals and analyses them).

Mr Drury defended the procedure by saying it was necessary in order to make it difficult for Canada's enemies to learn about the operation. "The counter-intelligence movement . . .", he said, "must, in order to be effective, itself be under cover . . . To take a popular analogy, this is a bit like engaging in a poker game in which one man discloses his hand by putting it on the table and the other keeps his hidden and then proceeds to bet."

Walter Baker, Progressive Conservative MP, Ottawa, was disturbed because, as he said: "Members are to find out about security organisations by accident" (the matter came up in a CBC television programme last year) "and then be denied any opportunity to

ask questions about the scope and purpose of such activities or the amount of money to be spent on them."

It would be comforting to accept assurances that everything being done in the name of security is fit and proper, but recent history in other countries suggested otherwise, he said.

Mr Drury admitted that the need for secrecy presents democracies with a problem, but the problem was not peculiar to Canada. "The problem, from the administrative view, is how to seek [this] parliamentary approval [for security expenditures] without disclosing in a comprehensible and clear way what is being done, and how."

In the past, said Mr Drury, when members of the House felt they must know what was being done, they had been informed *in camera*.

To which Stanley Knowles, New Democratic Party MP from Winnipeg, replied: "The last *in camera* session of this House of Commons that I can remember took place in 1944." Mr Knowles said it is open to the government to keep things secret, but quite a different matter to distribute items through a number of estimates in order to distort the picture given to Parliament of how money is being spent.

The Speaker concluded the session by saying that the "question is extremely important and complex, and I would like to look at it carefully." In view of the fact that Mr Drury had also offered to tell the ministers what was involved *in camera*, "it would perhaps be best to ruminate over the Easter break and see what might develop." □

An interesting footnote was to be found in a series of recently published letters from Dr C. J. Mackenzie, acting president of the NRC from 1939-1943, to General A. G. L. McNaughton, the president, who was on leave of absence as commander of Canada's field forces. (*The Mackenzie-McNaughton Wartime Letters*, edit. by Thistle, M., with introduction and epilogue by Mackenzie, C. J., University of Toronto Press, 1975).

In one of these letters, dated December 6, 1941, Dr Mackenzie said: "There is one very interesting but very secret development which only one or two of us know about. We have organised under the research council a section on cryptography which has succeeded in breaking down codes and cyphers and doing a really good job. It seems an unusual activity for the research council but the intelligence officers of the three services, the Mounted Police and the officers of External Affairs asked me if we could organise such a unit, as they thought we could probably do it easier and keep

it under cover better than in any other way . . . We have an associate committee consisting of the intelligence officers of the three services, the RCMP, a member from External Affairs and myself. We have an expert cryptographer from England and I look after the business arrangements, finances, etc . . . We got into it in the first instance because our facilities were such that we could start a unit in a modest way to see whether or not it was a practicable thing to do.

"My feeling was that after we had done the organising and got the staff trained, an official unit could be set up by the government to operate under one of the services or External Affairs. After six months of trial, which a decision had to be made as to how it should continue, all of the members were most insistent that they would prefer it to be carried on under our auspices and that will be done, for a while at least. It is pretty far from research but it is a most important and useful service."

Letter from Japan

from Yoshinobu Kakiuchi, Tokyo

Two new inter-university research institutes, the High Energy Physics Institute and the Institute for Molecular Science, have recently been established in Japan. The first is located at Tsukuba some 35 miles from Tokyo. The place is known as an academic town, the intention being that it should centre on universities and various research institutes. The High Energy Physics Institute was the first institution to be brought into the area, followed by the Pollution Research Institute and the Institute for Inorganic Materials, both of which belong to the