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Security Sub-Panel Document  
SSP - 11

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECURITY SUB-PANEL

Security Screening of Government employees  
and applicants for employment

Attached is a copy of a memorandum from the Officer i/c Special Branch, R.C.M. Police, setting out in detail a number of changes in procedures for security screening which Special Branch proposes to put into effect. A number of these changes have already been made on an experimental basis. They are designed to increase the efficiency of file checks and to provide government departments and agencies with quicker service.

2. The figures given in the memorandum for the experimental period show a considerable speed-up in security checks, but the memorandum poses a number of interdepartmental problems and brings to light a deficiency in Canadian security measures which must be corrected if present government security policy is to be implemented fully.

Central Index of Persons with "No adverse record"

3. In para: 10 of the memorandum it is pointed out that a substantial saving of time and labour could be made if the practice of opening files on persons concerning whom there is no adverse record were to be abandoned. Such files are of no value to the R.C.M. Police but have probably in the past served as a useful point of reference for departmental security officers.

4. The information contained in these files is, of course, available in the records of the department for which the check was made. The Sub-Panel is therefore asked to consider if the Secretary may send a circular letter to departmental security officers, advising them of this change. The letter would recommend that when a person who has previously been employed by other departments is to be the subject of a security investigation, an enquiry should first be made of those departments and of the Civil Service Commission to ensure that a security check has not already been completed.

5. In this connection members will note from para: 14 of the memorandum that Special Branch will take steps to ensure that any new information which may come to light concerning government employees will be passed to the departmental security officers.

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File Check against R.C.M. Police central criminal records

6. The proposals made in paras: 3 - 7 of the memorandum pose a more serious problem. They bring to light the fact that a check against the criminal records maintained at R.C.M. Police headquarters is a check against records containing information on only about 2% of criminal cases handled by the R.C.M. Police and on no criminal cases handled by municipal police forces or by the provincial police of Ontario and Quebec. Such a check would permit the employment in a government position requiring access to Top Secret information of a person with a long criminal record obtained in any municipality maintaining its own police force.

7. Paragraph 3 of Cabinet Directive No. 24 states: "Persons who are unreliable from a security standpoint, not because they are disloyal, but because of defects in their character which may lead to indiscretion or dishonesty, or may make them likely subjects of blackmail, must not be employed in any position where they may have access to classified information". To implement this policy, a knowledge of whether or not a person has a criminal record seems essential. A check against criminal records at R.C.M. Police headquarters will clearly not provide this knowledge. There therefore seems to be much force to the recommendation for stopping a procedure which more or less doubles the registry work of Special Branch to no real purpose. Presumably the information required must be sought by other means.

8. The following courses of action are set out for consideration by members:

- (i) The recommendation of Special Branch could be accepted and no further action taken. This would mean that a Canadian security check remained in fact a loyalty check, since only the subversive records of Special Branch would be consulted.

u/ This course of action would seem ~~in~~acceptable since it is not in accordance with government policy.

- (ii) Special Branch could be asked to continue to check names against criminal records at headquarters.

In view of the inadequacy of these records for the purposes under discussion, this course of action does not seem in any way justified.

- (iii) A security check could be broken down into two parts - a loyalty check against Special Branch subversive records, and a criminal check against the records of municipal and provincial police forces. Since Special Branch finds difficulty

in checking the large number of names submitted against central criminal records at sufficient speed, it seems unlikely that it could with present staff accept the more onerous burden of consulting with municipal and provincial police forces on over 100,000 cases a year. Responsibility for a criminal check would therefore fall to the departmental security officer or in the case of new employees to the Civil Service Commission. For this purpose machinery would have to be set up to place security officers and the Civil Service Commission in direct contact with municipal and provincial police forces. This method would have the virtue of dispersing the required effort among all departments and agencies.

However, a number of serious difficulties are likely to be encountered in any attempt to obtain information by this method. Assuming that the municipal and provincial authorities could be persuaded to cooperate, arrangements with the provincial police forces might not prove difficult, because of the ten provinces involved eight make use of the R.C.M. Police itself. But such a system of enquiry would be inadequate unless municipal police forces were also included, since the jurisdiction of the provincial police does not extend within the majority of municipal boundaries. In 1951 there were 734 municipalities with a population of over 1,000, and these 734 municipalities contained a population of a little under 8,000,000 out of a total population of 14,000,000. It seems hardly feasible that arrangements to obtain criminal records could be made on behalf of all government departments and agencies with over 700 police authorities, but even if this were possible nearly 50% of the population from which government servants might be drawn could not be checked.

A further difficulty is that the majority of municipal and provincial police records are primarily based on fingerprint identification. As a result, identification by a name check might often prove inaccurate and might lead to the kind of injustice which our security programme must avoid.

In addition it would be far from easy to devise a formula by which departmental security officers could be guided in selecting from a person's record the appropriate police authorities to consult. In cases where an employee had lived in a dozen communities during even a limited period of time, the number of enquiries to be made to obtain a satisfactory check might be prohibitive. If in spite of these apparent

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disadvantages such a course of action were to recommend itself to members, enquiries would probably have to be limited to provincial police forces and to a limited number of municipal police authorities in the larger urban areas. This would provide at best a very rough screening, and would be justified only on the grounds that it represented the maximum effort possible with present resources.

- (iv) All persons to be given access to classified information could be required to supply fingerprints. Attention is drawn to paragraph 5 of the Special Branch memorandum which states that 95% of all indictable offences are recorded centrally in Ottawa by the fingerprint system. Thus the information which a satisfactory security check may require from the police authorities in many parts of Canada is readily accessible in Ottawa if fingerprints can be supplied.

Fingerprints are at present taken by the Department of National Defence as a routine security measure. The tri-service Canadian Armed Forces Identification Bureau has well over a million sets of fingerprints on record, and of these approximately 200,000 are of civilians. No serious objections seem to have been made by employees. In considering the possible use of fingerprints members may wish to bear in mind that a high percentage of civil servants served at one time with the armed forces and that therefore their fingerprints are already available at CAFIB. These could be checked over a period of time without the employees' knowledge, and therefore any recommendation for fingerprinting of civil servants could be limited to new employees and to present employees who from time to time may be given access to classified information.

9. The Sub-Panel is asked to consider these possible courses of action and make a recommendation.

P. M. Dwyer,  
Secretary of the Security Panel.

Ottawa,  
June 19,  
1953.