

Prime Minister.

SECRET

I think Robert Armstrong's suggestion, "No", is the right answer. Agree?
MEAT 16/1

N 04075

MR MALLABY
MR WOOLLEY
MR ADDISON

Now we have a word. We are not entitled

To conclude the details of the embargo if we don't know. Because I doubted we have any responsibility for a

I attach a draft Answer to an unreachable oral Question from Mr Tam Dalyell, down for reply by the Prime Minister on 20 January. much inconvenient.

2. Some papers of the late Anthony Blunt are deposited under embargo at the British Library: the details of the embargo are not known to the Government, but it appears from Mr Dalyell's speech in the Security Services debate on 15 December (see paragraph 3 below) that it covers twenty years from Blunt's death. Blunt's brother, Wilfred, read the papers and told the Security Service after Blunt's death that he did not think they contained much of interest to them. In January 1985, Sir Robert Armstrong discussed with the Security Service, Lord Trend and Sir Frederick Dainton (the Chairman of the British Library Board) the possibility of government access to the papers. It would not be possible to read the papers without the Keeper of Manuscripts at the Library becoming aware that the embargo had been broken, and it was decided not to seek access unless there were some definite reason to believe that the papers included important and relevant material. *Note in the answer is study correct*

Please consider further
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19/1/87
In reaching
five "nothing"
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with

3. In the debate on the Security Services on 15 December, Mr Dalyell said he had been informed that a Government Agency had had sight of the papers and he asked if Ministers had been told about the papers and whether the latter had positively identified Sir Roger Hollis as a Soviet spy. He suggested that "the Security Commission, either itself or - better still - as a tribunal under the 1921 Act, should have a sight of what the Government Agencies know" (Official Report, Col 823).

SECRET

4. Wilfred Blunt has now also died. Although nothing concrete has emerged since January 1985 to cause us to reconsider the decision not to seek access to the paper, the Security Service are reviewing whether in the present climate the decision should be re-examined. Whatever the outcome, the obvious answer to Mr Dalyell's Question is "No", but this would invite a subsequent Question "Why not?". In view of the Prime Minister's statement on Blunt on 21 November 1979 (Cols. 402-410), it would also not be appropriate on this occasion to adopt the standard line about following the precedent set by previous Governments of not commenting on security matters. The best course would be for the Prime Minister to make clear that she has nothing more to say on Blunt than was contained in her November 1979 statement.

B. H. Dinwiddy

B H Dinwiddy

14 January 1987

Att.

I agree that the answer 'No' will provoke further questions. But it is a direct answer to the question. If the Prime Minister is not happy with the attached draft, a possibility designed to pre-empt some of the likely subsequent questions would be "I see no reason to do so."

CM
15.1.87

No answer will prevent Mr Dalyell from asking further questions. I amended the answer 'No'. If the Prime Minister wanted to hint that the Government have not seen the paper, a reference in answer as a Annex B will be possible. RA 15.1.87

SECRET



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION FROM MR. TAM DALYELL: BLUNT PAPERS

The Prime Minister has considered further the Answer to Mr. Dalyell's Question on which you advised on 15 and 19 January. She decided, in the end, to revert to the original Answer, namely "I have nothing to add to my statement on Mr. Blunt on 21 November 1979, col. 402-410".

However, the Prime Minister would like you to consider further, in consultation with the other departments concerned, the decision taken in 1985 not to seek access to the papers deposited at the British Library. This consideration should include advice on legal powers which would permit Government access to the papers and on what might be said in public to further enquiries on the lines of Mr. Dalyell's recent Question.

N.L.W.

N. L. WICKS

20 January 1987

SECRET

JURORS

Mr. Christopher Price accordingly presented a Bill to clarify the law governing the conduct of jurors and former jurors outside the courtroom; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 30 November and () printed [Bill 82].

MR. ANTHONY BLUNT

Motion made, and Question proposed.
That this House do now adjourn.—[Mr. Wakeham.]

Mr. Speaker: Before the debate begins, I should like to make a statement.

As the House knows, it is the general rule that matters which would entail legislation must not be discussed on a motion for the Adjournment. However, as I reminded the House on Monday, I am given discretion under Standing Order No. 16 to permit incidental reference to legislative action when enforcement of the prohibition would unduly restrict discussion. I propose today to exercise this discretion in respect of the general matter of the possible modification of the Official Secrets Act.

In the Prime Minister's written reply to a question by the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter), reference was made to information conveyed to the Palace. I therefore think it wise at this stage to draw the attention of the House to our well-established rule that any references to the Royal Family must be phrased in courteous language and must not reflect upon the conduct of the Sovereign. This does not, however, inhibit the full discussion of any advice which may or may not have been given to Her Majesty.

4.15 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): In the early part of last week, Professor Blunt was publicly identified as having been a suspect Soviet agent. This disclosure understandably gave rise to grave concern.

Last Thursday, in response to a priority written question from the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter), I thought it right to confirm that Professor Blunt had indeed been a Soviet agent and to give the House the salient facts. Today we have an opportunity to debate the whole matter. It may be convenient, therefore, if I start by setting out the facts in greater detail.

Professor Blunt has admitted that he was recruited for Russian intelligence when he was at Cambridge before the war. In 1940 he joined the Security Service.

[The Prime Minister.]

To us today it seems extraordinary that a man who had made no secret of his Marxist beliefs could have been accepted for secret work in any part of the public service, let alone the Security Service. But that is with the benefit of hindsight. Perhaps standards were relaxed because it was a time of considerable expansion and recruitment to deal with the wartime tasks of the service, which were directed against Hitler's Germany.

Professor Blunt has said that during his period in the Security Service from 1940 to 1945 he regularly passed to Russian intelligence anything that came his way which would be of interest to it. We do not know exactly what information he passed; we do know, however, to what information he had access by virtue of his duties. There is no doubt that British interests were seriously damaged by his activities. But it is unlikely that British military operations or British lives were put at risk. Further, the story that he jeopardised the lives of secret agents in the Netherlands is without foundation; he was never in the Special Operations Executive.

After he left the Security Service in 1945 and resumed his career as an art historian, Professor Blunt ceased to have access to classified information. He has said that from 1945 to 1951 he passed no information to the Russians.

In May 1951 an investigation which had continued for some years caught up with Donald Maclean. It was Philby who warned Burgess to tell Maclean that he was about to be interrogated. And it was Burgess who used Blunt as a contact with a Soviet controller to help with the arrangements for Maclean's flight to Russia—a journey in which he was joined by Burgess.

Blunt admits that on one occasion between 1951 and 1956 he assisted Philby in contacting Russian intelligence. He has said that he has had no contact with Russian intelligence since then.

The defection of Burgess and Maclean led to intense and prolonged investigations of the extent to which the security and other public services had been infiltrated by Russian intelligence.

At an early stage in these investigations Professor Blunt came under inquiry. This was as a result of information to the effect

that Burgess had been heard in 1937 to say that he was working for a secret branch of the Comintern and that Blunt was one of his sources. Blunt denied this. Nevertheless, he remained under suspicion, and became the subject of intensive investigation. He was interviewed on 11 occasions over the following eight years. He persisted in his denial, and no evidence against him was obtained. Of course, until his confession, the authorities did not know the extent of his involvement with the Russians or the period over which it lasted.

It was early in 1964 that new information was received relating to an earlier period which directly implicated Blunt. I cannot disclose the nature of that information but it was not usable as evidence on which to base a prosecution. In this situation, the security authorities were faced with a difficult choice. They could have decided to wait in the hope that further information which could be used as a basis for prosecuting Blunt would, in due course, be discovered. But the security authorities had already pursued their inquiries for nearly 13 years without obtaining firm evidence against Blunt.

There was no reason to expect or hope that a further wait would be likely to yield evidence of a sort which had eluded them so far. Alternatively, they could have confronted Professor Blunt with the new information to see whether it would break his denial. But Blunt had persisted in his denial at 11 interviews; the security authorities had no reason to suppose that he would do otherwise at a twelfth. If the security authorities had confronted him with the new information, and he still persisted in his denial, their investigation of him would have been no further forward and they might have prejudiced their own position by alerting him to information which he could then use to warn others.

Therefore, they decided to ask the Attorney-General, through the acting Director of Public Prosecutions, to authorise them to offer Blunt immunity from prosecution, if he both confessed and agreed to co-operate in their further investigations.

I should like to pause for a moment on this question of granting immunity, because I think that there may remain some misunderstanding about it. It is not

unusual for the Attorney-General to be asked to authorise immunity from prosecution in return for co-operation in the pursuit of inquiries. It happens from time to time in the course of criminal investigations. Under our constitutional arrangements, the decision is taken by the Attorney-General in his capacity as a Law Officer.

Dennis Canavan (West Stirling-shire): It is one law for them and another law for everybody else.

The Prime Minister: He takes it on the basis of what, in his view, is best in the public interest. He may consult his ministerial colleagues but he is not bound by their advice. The decision is his alone.

In this case, the then Attorney-General, Sir John Hobson, decided that it was in the public interest to offer an immunity from prosecution. In fact, to this day there is no evidence which could be used as a basis for prosecution against Blunt. So the offer of immunity was made. Professor Blunt confessed. Both at the time of his confession and subsequently he has co-operated in the inquiries of the security authorities. He had provided information about Russian intelligence activities and about his association with Burgess, Maclean and Philby.

After the Attorney-General's authority to offer immunity had been given, the Queen's private secretary was invited to a meeting with the permanent secretary at the Home Office and the Director-General of the Security Service. The Queen's private secretary was asked to the meeting because Blunt had, since 1945, held an unpaid appointment in the Royal Household for which he had been awarded a knighthood in the Royal Victorian Order in 1956. At this meeting, the Queen's private secretary was told that Professor Blunt was suspected of having been an agent of Russian intelligence, but that, provided he confessed and co-operated in the inquiries of the security authorities, he would be granted immunity from prosecution.

The Queen's private secretary asked what action the Queen was advised to take if Blunt confessed. He was told that the Queen was advised to take no action. Any action, of course, would have alerted Blunt's former Russian controllers and others who were already under suspicion to the fact that he had

confessed and could well be providing information to our security authorities. After Blunt had been interviewed and had confessed, as I have already described, the Palace duly followed the advice that had already been given.

I turn now to the question of how Ministers were informed. Relations between the Security Service and Ministers are governed by the directive given to the Director-General of the Security Service by the then Home Secretary, Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, in 1952. It is reproduced in Lord Denning's report of September 1963. When discussing and endorsing the principles embodied in that directive, Lord Denning said:

"The Head of the Security Service is responsible directly to the Home Secretary for the efficient and proper working of the Service and not in the ordinary way to the Prime Minister. . . . The Head of the Security Service may approach the Prime Minister himself on matters of supreme importance and delicacy, but this is not to say that the Prime Minister has any direct responsibility for the Security Service. . . . If the Director-General of the Security Service is in any doubt as to any aspect of his duties—as, for instance, when he gets information about a Minister or a senior public servant indicating that he may be a security risk—he should consult the Home Secretary. The Home Secretary will then have to take responsibility for further action."

I can tell the House that in the case of Blunt the Director-General of the Security Service followed scrupulously the procedures that had been laid down. He had a meeting with the Home Secretary on 2 March 1964, in the course of which he told the Home Secretary about the new information implicating Blunt and he indicated that he would be discussing with the Director of Public Prosecutions how to conduct the interview with Blunt, bearing in mind the Security Service's need to obtain as much intelligence as possible about Soviet penetration.

The Home Secretary drew his attention to the need to inform the Queen's private secretary. On 17 June 1964 a further meeting was held between the Home Secretary, his permanent secretary and the Director-General, in which the Director-General reported that Blunt had admitted spying for the Russians throughout the war when he was serving in the Security Service.

The Home Secretary of the day, now Lord Brooke, who, at first, did not recall being told—[*Interruption.*] At first, he

[The Prime Minister.] did not recall being told, which is quite understandable—[*Interruption*].

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: I shall start the sentence again. The Home Secretary of the day, now Lord Brooke, who, at first, did not recall being told, has been reminded of these meetings and has, with characteristic integrity, accepted that his memory must have been at fault. [*Interruption.*] There is no more honourable or devoted servant.

It is also clear that when the Attorney-General took his decision to authorise the offer of immunity from prosecution he knew that the Home Secretary had been made aware of the matter.

There was therefore no failure on the part of the Security Service to carry out its duty to inform the Home Secretary of these matters. It was for the Home Secretary to decide whether the Prime Minister should be informed. There is no record on this point. Neither Lord Brooke nor Lord Home can recall discussing the matter.

In the light of these events, I see no need to change the principles governing the relationships between the Security Service and Ministers, as set out in the Denning Report. I think it right, however, that there should be a clear understanding among all those concerned about how we expect those principles to be applied. I have accordingly agreed the following points with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

First, the Director-General should report to the Home Secretary if he receives information about a present or former Minister or senior public servant indicating that he may be, or may have been, a security risk, unless circumstances are so exceptional that he judges it necessary to report direct to the Prime Minister.

Secondly, when the Director-General has reported to the Home Secretary, it is the Home Secretary's responsibility to inform the Prime Minister or make sure that the Prime Minister is informed.

Thirdly, if the Attorney-General is asked to authorise a grant of immunity from prosecution in a case involving national security, he should satisfy himself that the Home Secretary is aware

that the request has been made. In cases of especial doubt or difficulty, the Attorney-General or the Home Secretary, or both, may wish to see that the Prime Minister is also aware that the request has been made. The Attorney-General and the Home Secretary should always be informed of the outcome of the offer of immunity. It is the responsibility of the Home Secretary to ensure that the Prime Minister is informed.

So much for the procedures between the Security Services and Ministers. I turn now to another matter. I am advised that since 1967 successive Prime Ministers and Home Secretaries have all been informed about the position on Blunt.

Further, as I indicated in my written reply, the matter was brought to the attention of successive Attorney-Generals in 1972, June 1974 and June 1979. That was to inform them of the immunity that had been given.

Any legal matters will be dealt with by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General when he replies to the debate.

I have been asked why a day's notice of my intention to reply to a written question was given to Professor Blunt's solicitor. Had there been any question of prosecuting Blunt, of course there would have been no advance notice—and, for that matter, no detailed reply either. Since there was no question of prosecution, there was no question of enabling Blunt to escape justice. His name had already been published, and it was reasonable therefore to tell his solicitor that I was going to give the facts in reply to a question in this House.

Clearly the public services are an attractive target for Soviet penetration, and the Security Service especially so. The service is very conscious of that danger. Indeed, in the light of all that has happened, it should be. Procedures for recruitment, vetting and monitoring members of the public services who have access to classified information have been much extended and improved. Of course nothing can be absolutely proof against penetration. In a democratic society it is always possible that a few will try to use freedom to destroy freedom. We must do everything that we can to prevent them.

May I sum up. First, the procedures under which the Security Service is directly responsible to the Home Secretary were scrupulously followed. After 1967 successive Prime Ministers and Home Secretaries were all informed about this case.

Secondly, the immunity was offered to not to get information on Soviet penetration into the public services. Neither at the time nor since has there been any evidence on which he could be prosecuted. I am advised that a confession obtained as a result of an inducement given would not be admissible as evidence in any prosecution.

Thirdly, the events of this case began well over 40 years ago. Many of the principal figures concerned, some of whom I have mentioned, have long since retired, and some have died. For obvious reasons, it is therefore not possible, and never will be, to establish all the facts accurately.

Mr. William Hamilton (Fife, Central): How many are still living?

The Prime Minister: These are some of the factors that will have to be taken into account in deciding whether there should be an inquiry, a matter on which hon. Members will doubtless wish to express their views.

Fourthly, we have now put beyond doubt the arrangements for reporting to and consulting the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister on security matters.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover):
rose—

The Prime Minister: May I go straight through? It is a very carefully marshalled statement.

In practice my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and I both make a point of keeping in close touch with the Director-General of the Security Service.

Fifthly, it is important not to be so obsessed with yesterday's danger that we fail to detect today's. We know what happened to a very few of that pre-war generation who had Marxist leanings and who betrayed their country. We find it contemptible and repugnant. Our task now is to guard against their counterparts of today.

Finally, the Security Service, by its very nature, has to work in secrecy.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): What about the brother of the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery)? The right hon. Lady cannot have it both ways. There were others as well—Marxists.

The Prime Minister: It cannot therefore defend itself in public. That task falls to Ministers. The Government's purpose is to do everything possible to improve the morale and effectiveness of the Security Service, and to do nothing to undermine or weaken it. In that aim I believe that we shall have the support of the House.

4.38 pm

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Leeds, South): One point that has arisen from the Blunt affair is the accountability of the Security Service and what part this House should play. I shall turn to that in a moment, but first I simply observe that this House will be unworthy of playing any part in security matters if today's debate develops into a witch hunt.

The Prime Minister has revealed the names of those who had knowledge of the matter. I make clear my disgust at the sordid activities of the group that have now been revealed. In my view "conscience" is the wrong word to invoke in that respect. However, it would be unworthy of this House to concern itself with political trivia in that context.

I have played a part in security matters over the years and I know that for either side of the House to believe that all the problems are on one side or the other would be a mistake. I shall concern myself with three matters—the events of April 1964, the directive given by the then Home Secretary, Sir David Maxwell Fyfe and the way in which that directive works—the House must put its mind to that matter—and the future.

It is clear that the events of 1964 have been clouded by the memories of old men, the deaths of some of the participants and the self-justification offered in recent days.

It may be that the procedures at that time, despite what was on paper afterwards, were not carried out well, but we are concerned with more recent years and the present. That is certainly what I was

recall that he sought to interest Conservative members, including the Chairman of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, in his allegations and to try to get them by various routes to the Prime Minister.

There is a crusading aspect to all this, and although it does not vindicate his subsequent actions it was serious in itself and leads me to remind the Minister that at the very least there ought to be a proper internal mechanism by which an officer who believes that something is seriously wrong can ventilate his grievance. That was one of the issues discussed by the Security Commission and the Prime Minister spoke about it in her statement to Parliament. I gathered from the Home Secretary when he replied to an intervention by me in the debate on 3 December that it is still under discussion and is one of the aspects of the Security Commission report which has not been fully resolved. Something must be done about that.

I see that in the end as linking naturally to some external oversight, because people are likely to have more confidence in an internal inspector-general, or whatever he may be, if he reports, as does the Ombudsman, ultimately to some external or parliamentary body. If there is no internal mechanism, that is yet another reason why people may believe that they have an excuse to go outside. I agree with the right hon. and learned Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) that no one can be allowed to be the sole judge of whether he has sufficient reason to break the confidence which is enjoined upon him in his position as an officer or former officer of the Security Service. He cannot be the sole judge, but if he has no other recourse and nowhere else to go, he is left in a very unsatisfactory position. I speak not only of Wright, but of very many officers who have found themselves in this position—[*Interruption.*]

Sir Ian Percival: Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the officer should be his own judge of when to speak? That really is a slippery slope.

Mr. Beith: Perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman was unable to hear me because of the noise behind me. I was agreeing with his statement that no security officer should be the sole judge of whether what is on his conscience or mind should be brought into the public domain. That cannot be right. Therefore, we must look for other mechanisms whereby people can ventilate grievances in a proper manner and feel that their case is being heard.

There are many things we have discussed today to which we will have to return. The Minister of State said in his speech that the public understand perfectly well what is at stake, and that they know and have a basic feeling about what is right and wrong in these matters. That is so, but the public at large also can see the total inconsistency of the position of the Government. The public can see that there is no distinction, as the Government pretend to draw, between someone who publishes a book in his own name, disclosing secrets learnt in his office, and someone who supplies that information, whether for money or not—in this case, it was for money—to another author to be included in a book which is subsequently described as being co-authored by the two individuals. There is no difference, moral or otherwise, in the importance of confidentiality in those two cases.

The Government are right to be concerned about ensuring that the confidentiality of the security services is kept, but they have undermined their case both by their

inconsistency and their consistent failure to recognise what really matters. It is absurd that we should go on pretending that we do not have an intelligence service and for Sir Robert Armstrong to be expected to deny in court that there is such a thing as MI6. But there are things which have to be kept confidential. If the Government were more consistent and offered genuine opportunities for oversight and for the aggrieved officer to raise his grievance in a suitable manner, they would be in a better position to work for the preservation of the confidentiality and day-to-day secrecy on which the security services depend to do their job on our behalf.

6.32 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): First, let me say constructively what I believe should now be done. The Security Commission should be converted into a tribunal of inquiry under the Tribunals of Inquiry (Evidence) Act, 1921. The Security Commission consists of Lord Griffiths, Sir Anthony Lloyd, the deputy chairman, and Lord Allen of Abbeystead and four others. Therefore, they have the legal firepower and are already in the business of security matters. I have discussed this with two former permanent secretaries of the Home Office and one former permanent secretary of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and believe that it is a sensible proposition.

To save time, I quote the powers. On 23 January 1964, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, the Prime Minister, in announcing the setting-up of the Security Commission said:

"Exceptionally, the Commission might find that they were unable to make progress without powers to compel evidence. In such a case, Parliament would be asked to pass the necessary Resolution under the Tribunals of Inquiry (Evidence) Act, 1921, to vest the Commission with the powers of that Act for that particular inquiry. The Commission would then proceed in all respects as a Tribunal of Inquiry." — [*Official Report*, 23 January 1964; Vol. 687, c. 1272-3.]

I am glad that we are not voting tonight, because I would have been uncomfortable about doing so, believing that these matters are very serious and that we must wait until the end of the court case in Australia. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) for agreeing to this.

The Security Commission or tribunal should discuss certain specific matters. The first of them concerns Anthony Blunt. I do not think it edifying for people like me, or most of us in this generation, to try to pass censorious moral judgments on men when in their late teens or early twenties in Cambridge or elsewhere in the 1930s. The lines between pro-Communism and passionate, and justified, anti-Fascism were blurred. From 1941 to 1945, Russia was on our side. For my part, I will remember Anthony Blunt as an inspiring lecturer who awakened my interest in the French impressionists.

What I am about to say I am perfectly prepared to repeat outside the Chamber. I do not shelter under privilege, but the House of Commons is the right place where a Member of Parliament should make such statements for the first time.

I believe that Anthony Blunt left a collection of documents compiled by himself and that those documents were bequeathed to his brother, whom I have not approached. The condition was that the documents should

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

not be made public for 20 years. I do not know whether Mr. Blunt's brother has read them. The papers were transferred to an institution in London for safekeeping.

However, I am informed and believe that a Government agency has had a sight of those papers. They revealed to the agency not only who the so-called fifth man was, but many other names and facts. Because the Prime Minister said that there was no proof that Sir Roger Hollis was a Soviet spy—that is before the papers being read, so I am sure that the Hollis statement was made in good faith by the Prime Minister on the basis of knowledge available at the time—it is difficult for the Prime Minister to admit any knowledge of who was a spy at this late stage. I take on board what was said by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot).

This brings me to the subject of burglary. For a Government agency to have read these papers was strictly illegal. Illegal or not, it has now been done. The parallel case is the break-in at Sidgwick and Jackson. That was illegal. That was six weeks before the book "Their Trade is Treachery" was published.

I ask the direct question: have Ministers been told about the documents bequeathed by Anthony Blunt? Have they been told whether knowledge that Hollis was positively identified as being a spy has come from these documents? I am not asking that the documents, which are very personal, should be made available, but I am asking that the Security Commission, either itself or—better still—as a tribunal under the 1921 Act, should have a sight of what the Government agencies know.

I am concerned about ministerial control over house-breaking by state agencies, which is akin to the problem of state telephone tapping. Is there effective ministerial control over breaking into and entering houses? This is a legitimate and important question, unless the House of Commons is told that there was no authorised breaking and entering.

House-breaking is illegal, just as phone tapping is illegal, infringing the right of privacy. A Minister may authorise phone tapping on internal matters. Which Minister is responsible for any rules of breaking into and entering houses, be they private houses or those of publishers? Peter Wright was the senior case officer when Blunt was supposed to have confessed. I understand that it is simply not true that he confessed all. Apparently, there is an affidavit that the Prime Minister misled the Commons on Blunt. Furthermore, parts of Blunt's testimony were kept out. Why? A tribunal should be told. After all, the Prime Minister came in with a great fanfare of trumpets, saying "I am going to get control of the security services", and then did nothing about it. Why have the doubtless good intentions gone astray? As I told him at the Islwyn constituency Labour party Chartist rally in November 1985, I am sure that my right hon. friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnoch), when he becomes Prime Minister, must give his mind to those problems. Does the Blunt testimony reveal who tipped off Burgess and Maclean? The late Colonel Marcus Lipton told me before he died that he believed that Burgess and Maclean had been tipped off by a senior figure of the so-called establishment, who did so out of the kindness of his heart on an old-boy network, and not by a spy or agent. This issue should be clarified by a commission or tribunal.

Another matter to which a commission or tribunal should turn its attention is a letter from Sir Michael Hanley to Wright, which reads:

"The firm is doing well and has passed recent examinations."

Was this a reference to a private inquiry by Sir Robert Armstrong into M15's activities against the Wilson Government? If so, on whose initiative and authority does the Security Service investigate some 30 persons such as Lord Kagan? Was it freelance or part of coherent control, and where was the accountability? What could Peter Wright have meant by using the words "deniable, authorised, illegal" when referring to activity in the Wilson years? It is the opinion of Mr. Richard Morton Taylor, who was in court, that he did not make this up.

The tribunal must consider the Attorney-General's role. Why did it take 10 days for Sir Robert Armstrong to apologise? The apology came 10 days after my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition—this is column 426 of *Hansard* of 27 November—had asked about the Attorney-General's role. Why was the Attorney-General not consulted about Rupert Allason? Why was he not consulted about Chapman Pincher? These are all questions to which there must be sensible answers.

For reasons of time I shall omit other questions that could be asked about the Attorney-General, save for one. The Government cannot have it both ways. They cannot say that they have M15 in control and then say at the same time that the Attorney-General did not know. Either the Government are in control—they are indivisible, are not they?—or they are not. When did Sir Robert Armstrong know about "Their Trade is Treachery"? Was it February 1981 or December 1980? How could Mr. Pincher be quoted as saying, "All is well now. All is hunky-dory"? I asked the question of the hon. Member for Stroud (Sir. A. Kershaw) about the time in 1984 that he was sending Clive Ponting's letter to me to the Ministry of Defence. He sent another document to Sir Robert Armstrong, which was a dossier from Wright. Why were Her Majesty's Government not as active about the Wright dossier as they were about the Ponting dossier?

It is important that the Labour party is committed to the Cirencester and Tewkesbury amendment of the Bournemouth conference of 1985, when it was promised that we would have some sort of tribunal to which civil servants could go who felt that they had been abused. Did Sir Robert Armstrong hush up the Kershaw note concerning the memorandum from Wright? Were other members of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs told? If so, should a chairman of a Select Committee keep such a matter to himself?

Finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it may be within your recollection that I raised with Mr. Speaker the issue of Members' telephones. My hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) has received a letter which I have cross-checked, which I think should be the property of the House. It reads:

"First of all, let me make it plain that I am not and never have been subject to the Official Secrets Act."

This is an anonymous letter. It continues:

"I will not identify myself because I am apprehensive of the Security Services. For 12 years, from 1968 to 1980, I was associated with the modernisation of the Government's telephone network covering the Whitehall area. The project consisted of eight central branch exchanges, each covering a geographical area of Whitehall, and all included all Government offices and buildings within that area. Each of these CBXs was connected to each other and to the outside

public network via a CBX tandem exchange located in the building known as the North Rotunda under the Department of the Environment at the entrance on Great Peter Street. In this building were located three of the eight CBXs, the others being located around central London. The Palace of Westminster was served by a CBX located in an underground bunker in Storey's Gate, since modernised, I believe.

You will appreciate from the above that the key to the whole network is the CBX tandem access, which would give anyone access to all telephone calls internally and externally, which is open to some 70,000 telephone lines. These included all MPs' telephones, Downing Street and any other telephones serving Government Departments for roughly one square mile around Whitehall. Access to the North Rotunda building is via a door to the right of the Great Peter Street entrance of the Department of the Environment, and required a pass issued by the authorities to visitors, who were allowed to fill in a visitor's pass that had to be handed over on leaving the building. On entering the building one is confronted by a flight of steps, opposite which is a glass-fronted office that is manned at all times by uniformed security officers. Over a period of time, mostly outside normal working hours, a room immediately to the left at the bottom of the steps was installed with extensive and very sophisticated equipment.

One day two severe-looking men turned up at the site and refused to show either identification passes or to fill in a visitor's document. After being refused admission, uniformed security guards received a telephone call instructing them and their colleagues to give all these men access day and night without question. These men and others manned the equipment in this room 24 hours a day. They never spoke or acknowledged normal greetings and access to the room was barred, of course. I cannot remember when this started, having no access to records, but it was a few weeks after MPs received push-button telephones instead of dial telephones. I am sure that this can soon be ascertained.

It soon became accepted by all the Post Office BT staff and the contracting engineers that the only possible purpose for which this equipment could be used was intercepting telephone calls. I am sure that you realise the implications. Imagine the political advantage if you were the Government of the day and you had access to every telephone call made and received by Opposition MPs, every civil servant in Whitehall, not to mention—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I hope that the extract is about to come to an end. The hon. Gentleman should be making a speech rather than reading a letter.

Mr. Dalyell: I merely say that it is not explained how telephone calls between my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and Australia were intercepted. The answer that Mr. Speaker gave me was to refer the matter to the Prime Minister. Many hon. Members are concerned about what has happened and I believe that the information that came to my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East rings true.

6.48 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall North): I am sure that the concluding point of my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) should be taken up by the authorities in the House. It is a serious matter which cannot be dismissed out of hand.

The only thing that I would say about the case in Australia, which my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) made much of, and rightly so, is that it was a mistake in the first place for the Government to pursue the case. I doubt whether they will win it, and the Government will be left with much egg on their face. The case has done nothing for the reputation of the Cabinet Secretary, who had an embarrassing brief, and to say the least. In the eyes of many in Australia, and perhaps in Britain as well, he made rather an ass of himself.

When the Select Committee on Home Affairs decided to look into the activities of the special branch, a number of witnesses came before the Committee to assure us that there was nothing to worry about. We know that the special branch works closely with the Security Service, and we were told that the work being undertaken by the Security Service and by the special branch was legitimate and that there was no question of anyone being inquired into because of his political views, that political dissent was legitimate, and that there was little to worry about. The majority of the Committee came to the conclusion that the evidence was sufficient to justify a report which stated that the work being undertaken by the special branch was perfectly in order.

Some Labour Members, however, were not convinced. I am sure that much of the work undertaken by the special branch is necessary and justified but many people—certainly many people in the Labour movement—are concerned that some activities carried out by the special branch have little to do with the security of the state.

It was near the end of our inquiry into the special branch that a television film called "M15's Official Secrets" was shown. Some people have said that we should not take too much notice of what Mr. Wright told the court—that he has exaggerated, and so on. In the television film, Cathy Massiter, a former official of M15, stated that a number of people and organisations were the subject of inquiries because of their political views. They are people and organisations who in no way can be described as trying to undermine our democratic institutions.

One of the organisations mentioned by Miss Massiter was the National Council for Civil Liberties. She said, as I remarked in an intervention in the speech of the Minister, that anyone who worked for the NCCL, anyone on the executive council and anyone who is active enough to be a branch secretary of that organisation is subject to inquiry, and a file is kept by M15. One of the people who was the subject of an investigation—and certainly a file by M15—was, apparently, my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) when she was the legal officer of that organisation. Is it suggested that my hon. Friend wants to undermine our democratic institutions and that she wants to turn this country into a Soviet republic? Therefore, inevitably, an argument that those activities are going on must give rise to a great deal of anxiety and undermine our confidence in the Security Service.

I wish to give another illustration. When a journalist of some 30 years resigned as the editor of the CND journal—he had fallen out, as people tend to do in various organisations—he was subject to several questions from the special branch. It wanted to know who lived with whom, and what was the leadership style of the then general secretary of the CND. What is the purpose of such questions? If it is claimed by Ministers, including the Prime Minister, that it is perfectly legitimate to argue that one can be in favour of nuclear disarmament without being a security risk, why are those questions asked? They must give rise to much concern.

From reports in the press and from what Miss Cathy Massiter states, I understand that in M15 there is what is known as an F branch. It is sub-divided into other branches. For example, F2 investigates trade unions, F7 investigates various political groups, including Members of Parliament—that is interesting to know—teachers,