

SECURITY INQUIRY

Witness calls for ASIO dossier

From FRANK CRANSTON

SYDNEY, Wednesday. — The Royal Commission into Australian Security and Intelligence Organisations was asked today to demand the immediate production of an ASIO file on a witness before the commission.

The president of the Council for Civil Liberties, Mr K. D. Buckley, asked the Royal Commissioner, Mr Justice Hope, of the NSW Supreme Court, to request that the file on him be delivered immediately. He was giving evidence at the opening of the first public hearings of the Royal commission.

"I ask for it to be made available so it can be used as an example of the triviality and irrelevance of the material in such dossiers", he said.

"I ask that it be delivered immediately. I do not put it past them to tamper with the file. Dirty tricks are part of their trade".

Mr Justice Hope, a former president of the Council for Civil Liberties, said later in the proceedings that he had considered Mr Buckley's request.

"In the present case, I have made arrangements for any such file to be made available to me", he said. "I do not propose to make it available for public access".

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Earlier, Mr Buckley had told the commis-

that without knowledge of how security organisations operated it was difficult to formulate questions which ought to be answered.

ASIO was a threat to civil liberties in Australia, Mr Buckley said. No one who was the subject of an adverse ASIO report was in a position to check its accuracy or to rebut it. He need not even know of its existence.

'Political purposes'

Mr Buckley said ASIO had not been content to collect and store information. Some of its officers had been prepared to use information for party political purposes. It had taken pictures of people at political demonstrations and compiled dossiers on them.

Mr Justice Hope said much could turn on what should be the types of activity in security matters which the country needed to guard against. One of the matters could be the existence of ASIO itself but there was a real need for a definition of subversion so as to know what a body concerned with it should do.

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subversion was pretty much a subjective thing, Mr Buckley said. What might be regarded as subversive in the Soviet Union would not be treated as such in Australia.

He said ASIO continued to employ individual spies though they were old hat years ago. It might be that Australia had no defence secrets worth spying on, but if it did they should be guarded in a different way. Terrorism could be handled by the ordinary police.

Mr Justice Hope pointed out that ASIO had advisory but no executive functions. If it had executive functions it could be a greater danger to civil liberties than suggested by Mr Buckley.

Mr Buckley said that although ASIO had no executive power it could in some way acquire them. The Council for Civil Liberties was not advocating the abolition of ASIO. It did not expect the present Government or a future government to do so, but its existence should be dependent on the establishment of safeguards for civil liberties.

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WITNESS ASKS FOR DOSSIER

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The Federal secretary of the Council for Commonwealth Public Service Organisations (CCPSO) told the Royal Commission his organisation was concerned with the compilation of ASIO dossiers on public servants and applicants for positions with the service.

His organisation believed in the need for one or two intelligence organisations to operate in the common good, Mr Gradwell said. There had been security vetting of Australian Government employees since at least 1917 and his organisation accepted it as a fact of life.

He drew attention to the need for people disadvantaged by security re-

ports to be immediately advised of the fact with the fullest possible explanation. He suggested the appointment, on a part-time basis probably, of a Security Commissioner who could review such adverse reports.

Possibly if his organisation knew the rules which governed the compilation of security reports it might not be so concerned. He agreed with the Royal Commissioner that CCPSO did not even know if there were general rules, a point on which Mr Justice Hope said he might later be able to give some general information.

Mr Gradwell agreed with the Royal commissioner that there were public service positions which should need no security vetting. After

Mr Gradwell had cited the Honey Board, Mr Justice Hope cited the Department of Aboriginal Affairs as a possible example.

A member of the national executive of the Communist Party of Australia, Mr J. Palmada, agreed with Mr Justice Hope that his organisation may have special views on what constitutes subversion.

Mr Palmada submitted that ASIO and other security organisations in Australia should be disbanded as organisations spying on the radical Left and Labor movement.

"Extreme terrorist, fascist organisations like the Ustasha and the Nazi Party, can boast of their armed

tasha and the Nazi Party, can boast of their armed training facilities in Austra-

lia, openly and in their publications", he said. "Communist party headquarters can be bombed, windows of left-wing bookshops smashed repeatedly and death threats made against leaders of the Labor movement".

Mr Palmada gave instances of alleged bugging of the Communist Party and attempts to infiltrate their organisation. The commissioner, however, suppressed the names of most of the persons contained in the submission until he satisfied himself that the names had already been published or that the people concerned were agreeable.

About 40 people attended the hearing. No date was set for a resumption of the public hearing.