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Justices in Australia's Spy Probe Have Wider Powers Than in Court

By HAROLD TILLEY
MELBOURNE (Reuters)—There are interesting contrasts in the way in which Canada and Australia set about handling the problem of wholesale espionage disclosures.

An Australian royal commission with unprecedented powers now is holding an inquiry into the disclosures made by Vladimir Petrov, who defected from the Russian embassy last April 13. Open hearings will resume June 30 with Petrov and his wife, Evdokia, the first witnesses.

Petrov turned over to Australian authorities hundreds of documents outlining Russian espionage activities in Australia, included in the documents were the code names of at least 30 Australians said to be part of the espionage ring. The senior Commonwealth counsel at the hearings, W. J. Windever, said at the most recent hearing that the activities of at least 70 persons mentioned by Petrov would require investigation.

The royal commission to investigate the Petrov disclosures differs from other royal commissions in Australia, in that the others have never had the power to compel witnesses to appear and testify. This espionage royal commission, having been set up by a special bill which was hastily enacted by the Australian Parliament, has

such power to compel attendance, and to punish by fine or imprisonment the refusal to give evidence.

MUST ANSWER QUESTIONS
The supreme court justices sitting as the royal commissioners have wider power over witnesses than they have in a supreme court. Witnesses before the commission are not excused from answering any question or producing any document on the ground of privilege.

A witness who is unwilling to answer questions is informed by the royal commissioners that he must reply truthfully, and that he will be protected from future proceedings. That is, a witness does not legally incriminate himself, nor is he open to civil action, because of anything said by him in evidence.

That means that confidential communications between a witness and his legal advisers, his trade secrets on which his livelihood depends, his most intimate family and financial affairs, must come publicly into the open if the commissioners feel they are relevant.

It has been held that under this system even the physician cannot refuse to reveal the secrets of the consulting room, or the priest those of the confessional.

The only reservation made in this respect is that members of parliament retain their right to refuse to give certain types of evidence, or to answer certain questions put to them.

When he introduced the bill to set up the espionage royal commission, Prime Minister Robert Menzies said: "The commission will have complete responsibility for investigating these matters so that nothing hidden shall not be made known. Let there be no doubt about that."

Australian authorities are following a much more open course of action in investigating the Petrov disclosures than was followed in Canada when Soviet embassy cipher clerk Igor Gouzenko made his disclosures in September, 1945.

Gouzenko left the Soviet em-

bassy with a sheaf of papers Sept. 5. The next day he was able to see officials of the Canadian government. A secret investigation by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police was launched at once. Nothing whatsoever was made public for more than six months.

The cabinet passed an order-in-council on Feb. 5, 1946, setting up a royal commission to investigate the espionage ring. The commission started its sittings behind closed doors on Feb. 13, and had been in session for two days before Prime Minister Mackenzie King made the first public statement on the case.

On Feb. 15, the Prime minister disclosed the existence of the suspected spy ring and announced the appointment of a royal commission. His announcement did not name Russia, stating only that an unspecified number in connection with the disclosure of state secrets to members of a foreign mission in Ottawa.

The royal commission questioned the 13 persons detained. This evidence was included in the commission's final report and was used at the trials of 19 persons eventually brought to trial.

Trade Mission To Russia For B.C. Agent

VICTORIA (CP)—A British Columbia representative of the Canadian Congress of Labor will join eight others from eastern Canada in a mission to Russia which will attempt to drum up orders for Canadian shipyards, a union official said Monday.

Jack Cornthwaite, business agent for the Victoria local of the Machinists, Helpers and Fitters Union CCL, said the representatives will investigate the possibilities of handling multi-million Soviet orders for ships and other equipment in Canadian yards.

"This is not a propaganda mission," he said. "We will strictly be after business."

Shipyard managements would be informed and action would be taken to seek government approval to handle USSR trade after the mission returns.

At Ottawa, Donald Macdonald, secretary of the CCL, said the Victoria report is the first the congress has heard of such a trip. He said Mr. Cornthwaite has no authority to speak for the CCL.

Fraser Takes Another Life

STEVESTON, B.C. — The Fraser river took its third life in 24 hours in the delta area Monday night when a four-year-old boy fell off the Fishermen's Co-Operative wharf here and was drowned.

Little Wayne Enge was pulled from the water by Fred Krauchi who applied artificial respiration, but the boy died before an inhalator crew arrived.

Two men were drowned near Richmond Sunday in a rescue attempt.

Davis Named Ambassador

OTTAWA — Appointment of Hon. T. C. Davis of Prince Albert, Sask., as Canadian ambassador to Japan was announced recently.

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LOVELY MARCELLE PONOMAREFF steals the scene from a bunch of roses as she radiates her beauty for the crowd at Nice, France, upon being elected Floher Queen of the Riviera. Marcelle is a ballerina at the Nice Opera.

Britain's Socialized Medicine Caused No Doctor-Patient Rifts

LONDON (Reuters)—Britain's socialized medical service has done no harm to the relationship between doctors and their patients, it was disclosed in the first official survey of general practices under the six-year-old health system made public today.

Most frequently heard popular criticism of the service has been that it has taken the personal relationship out of medical practice.

But, said the survey, doctor-patient relationships generally are "good" and actually may have improved under the new system.

This is attributable to the absence of the "money bar" and a notable increase of co-operation between doctors, the report said.

The report was drawn up by a committee of the central health services council set up in December, 1950, under the chairmanship of Sir Henry Cohen, a former president of the British Medical Association.



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