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MEMORANDUM FOR THE CABINET COMMITTEE ON SECURITY
AND INTELLIGENCE

Security Screening: Personal History Form

1. The Security Panel has recently approved the attached Personal History Form, which is a revision of a form previously approved by the Panel in 1954 as the basis for security screening procedures required by Cabinet Directive No. 29 of December 21, 1955. Under the provisions of the Cabinet Directive both the loyalty and the reliability of individuals who have to be given access to governmental secrets must be established to the satisfaction of the Minister responsible for the department in which the classified documents are retained. In order to do this, it is the practice in Canada, as it is in all countries of the western alliance, to obtain detailed information concerning the individual's past activities by means of answers to questions of the sort contained in the attached Personal History Form. The answers supplied by the individual serve as initial leads for the R.C.M. Police or the Armed Services investigative agencies, who first verify the accuracy of the information and may subsequently elaborate upon it as a result of information obtained during the course of a background inquiry if this required.

2. Basic considerations in using such a form have been to obtain sufficient information from the individual in the first instance that, through appropriate investigation, it will be possible to determine:

- (a) his true identity and whereabouts and those of his immediate relatives who may be in a position or situation which may permit or require them unduly to influence his actions or attitudes;
- (b) whether he or those closely related to him have ever engaged in subversive activity;
- (c) whether his living habits and employment have been such that he may be deemed reliable or otherwise;

and generally,

- (d) whether his loyalty, reliability, character and habits are such that he would not be vulnerable to persuasion by those who would undermine the national security.

3. Since 1947 the government of Canada has approved the use of a personal questionnaire for these purposes, and has from time to time reviewed the actual form in use, with a view to improving its

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effectiveness without permitting its use to intrude unduly on the personal privacy of the employees or prospective employees concerned. In 1960, as a result of a proposal that all nations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization include in their security questionnaire a question concerning travel to communist-dominated countries, the government agreed to include such a question. At the same time, the Security Panel was asked to review the form in use at that time, and consider other changes which might be made in the form in the light of experience since 1954, when the form had last been revised. The Security Sub-Panel undertook a detailed review of the form and its use, recommended a variety of mechanical and presentational changes, and secured the approval of the Security Panel for the inclusion of a question requiring the listing of three character references. During the review, questions which could not be related directly to well-established security requirements were deleted.

4. While no personal questionnaire, however elaborate and exhaustive, can preclude unreliable or disloyal persons from going undetected, and while no investigation can guarantee absolutely that an employee is suitable to be entrusted with a government's secrets, our experience and that of our allies has shown that the basic information to be requested in the attached proposed form is essential to the effective conduct of the further investigations that are required to establish loyalty and reliability.

Use of the Personal History Form

5. When an employee of the government, or of a commercial firm engaged in a classified contract on the government's behalf, is being considered for appointment to a position requiring access to classified information, he is asked to complete a Personal History Form. It is then forwarded by the employing department or agency to the R.C.M. Police with a request that they conduct either a "records check" or, if access to information classified Top Secret is involved, a "full field investigation". In either case, the form is first checked against the subversive indices of the R.C.M. Police to determine whether the individual or any member of his immediate family has a record of subversive activity. When access to information classified either Confidential or Secret only is required by a department, a negative result from this search of records is considered an adequate minimum basis on which the department may grant a security clearance.

6. When access to information classified Top Secret is required it is necessary, in addition to the search of subversive records, to conduct an investigation 'in the field'; that is, to establish by interviews with previous employers, former teachers, neighbours and others who may be in a position to have formed a judgement as to the individual's behaviour and actions, as well as those by whom he may be influenced, a comprehensive view of what can be known of the individual's background. This information is collected by the R.C.M. Police or other investigative agencies, summarized, the sources of the information evaluated as to their probity and reliability, and the summarized file forms the basis for a departmental judgement as to the desirability of allowing the individual to have access to the more sensitive of governmental secrets.

7. An additional procedure which does not involve the use of the Personal History Form but which does produce information which may bear on reliability is a search of criminal records

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using fingerprints as a method of identification; this procedure is carried out whenever a clearance for security is considered, except in defence industry, as a result of a Cabinet decision on November 26, 1953.

8. It is recommended that the Cabinet Committee approve the use of the attached form in initiating security screening procedures in departments and agencies of the government and in defence industry in accordance with the policy enunciated in the Cabinet Directive on Security.

R. G. Robertson,
Chairman of the Security Panel.

Privy Council Office,
September 17th, 1963.

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