The 1970s began in much the same way as the 1960s ended, with the large private security companies locked into the rules of the games set down by the Home Office and the police. However, this turned out to be only a relatively temporary arrangement, as over the course of this decade the politics of private security sparked back into life. The trigger for this third phase of the negotiations was the entry of numerous parliamentary actors into the political arena. The pro-regulation reform agenda shared by these actors interfered with the anti-regulation settlement reached by the Home Office and the police at the end of the 1960s, and accordingly brought these different parts of the state into conflict with one another over the issue of private security regulation. This conflict in turn created a window of opportunity for the executives of the large private security companies to manoeuvre their way back into the centre of the controversial debate over the composition of the post-war security sector. This chapter will chronologically map out this phase of the politics of private security.

Parliament, privacy and private security

When key parliamentary actors began to engage with the politics of private security in the early 1970s, they seemed to have a predisposition towards a pro-regulation reform agenda. The previous chapter alluded to this predisposition with regard to Raphael Tuck’s efforts to influence the position of the Home Secretary, Frank Soskice, over the possible regulation of private investigators. However, the beginnings of this trend can actually be traced back a little further to the early 1960s, when Parliament began its decade-long fixation with the issue of privacy – a fixation which was instrumental in framing the next phase of the
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political negotiations. It began in 1961 when Lord Mancroft (Conservative) introduced his Right of Privacy Bill. Although the Bill itself was very broadly pitched, intending ‘to give to every individual such further protection against the invasion of his privacy as may be desirable for the maintenance of human dignity’ (HL Bill [1960–1] [35]), during the Bill’s second reading it became clear that its remit included, among other things, the licensing of private investigators (HL Deb [1960–1], vol. 229, col. 607). While the Bill did not progress beyond its second reading, it did generate a great deal of sympathy within the Lords and seemingly ignited a general parliamentary interest in the twinned issues of the protection of privacy and the statutory regulation of private investigators (Madgwick and Smythe 1974, p. 11). This interest was central to the development of the pro-regulation reform agenda among many parliamentary actors.

It should also be mentioned at this point that, although private investigators have not yet been analysed in this book, they do constitute a rather small (see George and Button 2000, pp. 90–2) but highly interesting section of the private security industry. Like the manned guarding side of the industry, private investigators have sought to operate in a domain over which the modern state has traditionally claimed something approaching a monopoly. Indeed, the Metropolitan Police Detective Department was established back in 1842 and since this time the police detective has permeated the British national consciousness through a variety of media, such as detective novels, television series and films (McLaughlin 2007). As such, the activities of private investigators in the post-war security sector have been influenced by the same political norms which have structured the activities of the manned guarding companies, and they have accordingly been concerned with similar issues of legitimacy. So, not only were the parliamentary actors adopting a pro-regulation reform position, but they were doing so in relation to a section of the private security industry which was more than likely to support such a position in line with the re-legitimation agenda.

Returning now to the development of the parliamentary pro-regulation reform agenda: in February 1967, six years after Mancroft’s Bill, Alexander Lyon MP (Labour) introduced his Right of Privacy Bill into the House of Commons under the ten minute rule. This Bill was an explicit attempt to continue Mancroft’s earlier endeavours to generate wider parliamentary interest in the protection of privacy. Lyon did not, however, manage to secure a second reading and his lobbying activities soon faded away (HC Deb [1966–7], vol. 740, col. 1566). Yet this