

Ms. Mitchell: Only one Member of our Party is allowed to sit on the Justice Committee which considered this Bill. The rest of us would like to hear what points the Progressive Conservatives wish to make. I do not know because—

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Hon. Member continues to ask where the Conservative Party is on this. Apparently she was not here this morning and has had no reports from the committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Herbert): Once again that is not a point of order but a point of debate.

Mr. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Surely the point is that the Tories have the right to speak this afternoon and they are not putting up any speakers. For them to suggest that somehow the proceedings—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Herbert): It is entirely within the rights of any Member to speak or to stay silent as he or she wishes.

Ms. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I think your remarks indicate that the Progressive Conservatives have chosen not to speak. I would point out to the previous speaker that I was in the Chamber this morning. I did not hear any of the speakers seriously state their objections.

Mr. Fraser: I dealt with all the amendments, Margaret. Get the cotton out of your ears.

Ms. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, I would like to summarize the historical context which led up to the present irresponsible and deplorable Bill. It is really important that we look at the history of RCMP wrongdoings, the McDonald Commission recommendations, and Bill C-157, which was even worse than the present Bill, Bill C-9.

In 1976, the RCMP criminal wrongdoings in Quebec became a matter of national concern. These were documented in 1977 by the McDonald Commission which criticized severely the illegal acts undertaken by members of the security force of the RCMP. The McDonald Commission concluded that there had been widespread institutional law breaking by members of the security service. Most Canadians had been really proud of our national police force, the RCMP. They were shocked at that time to learn of these undercover activities, which we never dreamed would ever take place in Canada.

Even worse is the fact that once the McDonald Commission had revealed these wrongdoings, the Government did not take disciplinary action except in a few minor cases. It appeared that the Government was protecting the RCMP and even condoning such acts. Canadian laws, which must apply to all Canadians, including members of the RCMP, were ignored.

The McDonald Commission recommended that a civilian security service be established. However, it was clear that it did not intend a security service similar to that proposed in Bill C-9. I am sure the commission would be very concerned that Bill C-9 proposes a private spy agency which can do almost

Security Intelligence Service

anything. It will have inadequate safeguards with respect to oversight. There will be no control over its powers.

The first attempt by the Solicitor General (Mr. Kaplan) was a very negative attempt to do something about a separate security service. That was Bill C-157, which was totally inadequate. It was a complete embarrassment to the Government and should have been to that Minister. I do not see why he was not forced to resign. The Minister did not bring this back to Parliament. He allowed the Senate to revise it. The Senate Liberal appointees disregarded much of what was in that Bill and went back to the McDonald Commission recommendations.

In developing both Bills, the Government completely disregarded the reports and criticisms of experts in the whole field of civil liberties, as mentioned repeatedly by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson). Bill C-9 gives sweeping powers to interfere in civil liberties. It lacks proper oversight and accountability. We strongly object to the establishment of such a new civilian spy agency which has special powers to open mail, wiretap, and make surreptitious entry into homes and offices of Canadians, even those who have not broken the law. The proposed agency will have the power to use confidential personal information, government records, doctor's records and so on. As my colleague said this morning, the only exemption will be Stats Canada.

I am opposed to this Bill personally as well as in my capacity as a member of the New Democratic Party. I am opposed as a professional social worker as well as a Member of Parliament. I wish to take a moment to give some examples from this profession. The application of this Bill respecting the security police service such as this Bill proposes is completely in conflict with professional ethics and the democratic concepts of confidentiality as espoused by the Canadian Association of Social Workers and by professional social workers.

All too often poor people are victims of government institutions. Many times they feel intimidated and not protected in their rights. However, this Bill will go much further. Innocent people, particularly those registered with social service agencies because they are required to seek social assistance, who have the guts and the courage to oppose some of what they are experiencing, those who fight for welfare rights, for example, are likely to be photographed, if they are not already, by the RCMP. They will likely be victimized even more as a result of this Bill.

● (1600)

We know that unemployed people who are on social assistance and who, for example, are involved in protesting poverty, unemployment and the cutbacks that are being experienced, particularly in British Columbia, are likely to be suspect. If they organize welfare rights groups and advocacy groups and become more militant in demanding decent incomes, their activities are likely to be documented. If they dared to question the reasons for poverty, reasons which definitely involve the Government, and perhaps even use violent language, they will indeed be suspect even further. If they become militant enough