

*Official Secrets Act*

the matter. I can assure the hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville that we are going ahead and that I am now preparing proposals for my cabinet colleagues on this matter. In a sense I am not really waiting for the final report of the committee, but I am reassuring hon. members that when the report of the committee appears later this month it will certainly have an impact on the proposals I make. I will certainly not come forward with any final proposals until I have had a chance to assess the views the committee brings forward.

I want to assure the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and the hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville that as a government we are determined to proceed to the implementation of the principles which those hon. members, myself and all members of this House accept, the basic principle being that the information in the hands of the government must be available to the public. We know that there are aspects of the question which are complex. I have wrestled with them. The hon. member for Peace River has wrestled with them. The Joint Standing Committee on Regulations and other Statutory Instruments has wrestled with them. The committee is coming forward with its report. I will be presenting proposals to my colleagues. It is very much my hope that I will be presenting legislation in this regard early in the new session. Progress is being made. I hope the House will understand that the commitment of the government to this principle is fundamental. We shall proceed as expeditiously and efficaciously as we possibly can.

**Mr. Paul Dick (Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to compliment the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) for his efforts over the last number of weeks and for his determination in trying to bring a very sad state of Canadian affairs to light. I think the intent of the motion he has put forward today is the very minimum position this House should adopt. When I say "this House", I include the government. This matter should be referred to a committee.

I suggest that this government should take the position being taken by the hon. member for Peace River when he asks the Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford) to apply to the court to declare a mistrial. I suggest that a new trial should be directed and that that trial should be held in the open.

We heard some comments earlier today by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang). In his efforts to put down the mover of this motion he spoke quietly and with repetition. I feel that he spoke in this way because he had such a weak case. He does not have the facts on his side, so he used up his 20 minutes quietly trying to accuse others of doing things he feels they should not have done.

This is the forum in which things of national importance are brought forward to be discussed, and today we are dealing with a matter of crucial importance to the democratic way of life we believe we have here in Canada, that is, civil liberties and rights being guaranteed to human beings.

The hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville (Mr. MacGuigan) also deplored certain aspects of the presentation of the hon. member for Peace River. He went on to point out that

he agreed with certain parts of the Franks report dealing with the official secrets act of England. I felt that there was much prattle but not very much substance in the three speeches from the government side.

We have heard from the Secretary of State (Mr. Roberts). He did not talk about the resolution at all. He spoke about freedom of information, which has been discussed for four or five years. If members of the government would stop talking, do something concrete and put something before the House—which could have been done three years ago—we would be well on the way. However, they have been prattling quietly today because the facts as they appear in this case indicate that perhaps a wrong course of action has been taken in Canada.

I have always been a very proud Canadian. I suppose I am nationalistic, and I am somewhat embarrassed by the fact that there has been a trial in this country which has been held in absolute and total secrecy. I am not ashamed of my country, I am not ashamed of our way of life, but I am embarrassed about this.

● (1542)

Perhaps I can draw to your attention, Mr. Speaker, that on February 15, 1977, as reported at page 3041 of *Hansard*, the former member for Eglinton, the Hon. Mitchell Sharp, stated that Canada was the strongest proponent of basket three incorporated in the final act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, popularly known as the Helsinki Agreement. He went on to move a motion under Standing Order 43 which read as follows:

That the Secretary of State for External Affairs convey to the government of the Soviet Union the disappointment and deep concern of the elected representatives of the Canadian people in parliament assembled at the arrest of Alexander Ginsberg, Mykola Rundenko, Alexy Tikhy and Yuri Orlov.

What he was doing in that motion was condemning an act in the judicial proceedings and the way in which things were carried out in the Soviet Union which is foreign to our ways in this country. We did not feel it was right and therefore we condemned it.

On March 2, 1978 a motion was put forward by the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Roche), seconded by the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Fraser), under Standing Order 43 which read as follows:

That the Canadian government request the Soviet government for permission to appoint an official observer at the trial of Anatoly Shcharansky on charges of treason so that the wide international community of concerned people can be assured that justice is done in this very important human rights case and, further, that the Canadian government repeat its offer to give immediate landed immigrant status to Mr. Shcharansky.

We as the House expressed concern in an official motion which has been adopted, and yet now we are saying that we do not even want the Canadian people to know what is going on at a secret trial in our own country. It seems absolutely absurd.

We find further that on Thursday, May 18 of this year, the following motion under Standing Order 43 was put forward by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) and seconded by the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. MacEachen):