

CHAPTER THREE

Primary Mandate — Warning the Government

3.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the primary mandate of CSIS — the collection, analysis and retention of information and intelligence relating to threats to the security of Canada. Prior to dealing with the primary mandate set out in section 12 of the *CSIS Act*, the definition of threats to the security of Canada will be discussed and recommendations made. This definition provides the entry to the Service's primary mandate — if an activity does not fall within its ambit, it cannot become, at least under section 12, the object of CSIS attention. The issues dealt with in discussing this definition are difficult and controversial.

3.2 Threats to the Security of Canada

3.2.1 *In General*

In 1983 and 1984, the definition of threats to the security of Canada was one of the most controversial objects of debate in relation to Bills C-157 and C-9. The issues raised by this controversy are as important today as they were then but, surprisingly, the debate before this Committee on the issues, as on some others, was neither as vigorous nor as polarized as it was during that earlier period.

The definition required the adoption of what the 1983 Special Senate Committee called a “delicate balance” to address the controversy contained in discussions of threats to the security of Canada. The opposing views in this controversy found their way into testimony before the Committee. Some witnesses expressed the view that Canada should recognize that threats to the country's security have not diminished and that the Service's powers to deal with them should not be lessened. Others told the Committee that the looseness of wording in the definition of threats to the security of Canada may lead to the infringement of rights and freedoms of Canadians who do not represent threats to the country's security.

The Director of CSIS told the Committee in public session that despite political changes in many countries, there has been little reduction in the intelligence activities of other countries in Canada. He informed the Committee, for example, that because of the poor state of the economies of certain countries, they still actively seek technological and scientific information to build their own infrastructure. The Committee was told that the