

*Criminal Code*

than Canada has. We do not even have a bill of rights in our constitution.

This statement of the Solicitor General's is pure buncombe that Canada has the most secure civil liberties of any nation in the world. It has not. It has the Official Secrets Act which gives the Solicitor General and the government unlimited power. It has many other powers so that civil liberties do not even weigh in the balance. How can anyone say that, with the record of the last six or eight months of what has been revealed of illegal activity by the people who work for the executive branch of the government? How, after what we have heard for the last six or eight months, can any Solicitor General stand up and say that we are so secure in our civil liberties?

Where were the civil liberties when the barn was burned down in Quebec? Where were the civil liberties when the break-in took place in L'Agence de Presse down in Quebec? Where were the civil liberties then? Where were the civil liberties when they broke into the Parti Québécois headquarters to take membership lists? Where were they then? Where are the civil liberties, when, as the Laycraft inquiry has shown out in Alberta, the law has been ignored by the RCMP and by National Revenue officials who interchange information? The income tax people are giving information to the RCMP illegally when the RCMP wants it, and vice versa; as revealed in the Laycraft inquiry. Where were the civil liberties then? So the vast majority of people are not interested in civil liberties because they never come across it. Their rights are not interfered with. But there are other people who do get interfered with, who do come across the law. And then they become concerned about civil liberties when they see what can be done to them even if they are innocent. I am concerned with civil liberties, Mr. Speaker, and that is why I am not going to support this bill in its present form.

The member for Perth-Wilmot (Mr. Jarvis) who opened the debate for our side has done a first-class job. He has done an excellent job. He has done an excellent job as critic of the Solicitor General. I agree with the principle that he stated when he opened the debate are reported at page 3770 of *Hansard* of the same date:

We support in principle the legal interception of mail in special specified circumstances, given adequate safeguards and given the situation where the more normal, acceptable and traditional methods of law enforcement have proven ineffective. Therefore, we support Bill C-26 in principle. In our view it meets most of these requirements.

He went on to say changes will have to be made in committee. I cannot accept his statement, Mr. Speaker, that I can support the bill in principle. I might be able to support the bill if it goes to committee and it comes out with adequate safeguards in relation to national security so that the Solicitor General himself, and he only, is not left in a position of having the power to decide what mail interceptions are going to take place or not. If it is amended to provide some effective safeguards I could go along with it. Therefore, I intend to abstain when the vote comes if I am here because I want to wait and see whether the bill comes back improved. If the bill

[Mr. Crosbie.]

comes back as it is now without substantial improvements that protect civil liberties, I will vote against it on third reading.

I do not want to embarrass my own party, but this is a matter that transcends party consideration, in my view. I agree, Mr. Speaker, the Solicitor General opened the debate and he did nothing to show why we need the legislation passed. The gall and the impudence of it will take your breath away. What the Solicitor General is doing in effect is saying, "Look, we have sinned for 40 years. We have violated the laws of this land." What law did you violate? Section 43 of the Post Office Act, which excluded any other act from interfering with the post office and stated that nothing is liable to demand, seizure and detention while in the course of post except as permitted by the law.

● (1442)

For 40 years, the government, the Solicitor General and everybody in government who should have known about this permitted the law to be ignored and permitted interception of mail to take place illegally in Canada. Now they come before us and say, "We have sinned, forgive us for our past sinning, and authorize us to go on sinning in the future." They have not given any reason why it was necessary in the past or why it is necessary in the future.

The present Solicitor General when Postmaster General assured the world that mail was not being intercepted and opened. The present Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Allmand) assured anyone who was interested that mail was not being intercepted or opened.

When all this became public, they agreed that mail was being illegally intercepted. There was no apology, not even a word to say they were sorry. They just brazenly came into this House with other legislation to authorize them to keep on intercepting and opening mail and, in the case of national security, without any check by anybody of what they are doing.

If the old saying that patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel is an accurate statement, and it certainly was accurate with regard to some people who used to wrap themselves in the flag, then national security is the last refuge of a power-mad and power-hungry government that wants to stay in power forever. That is what this is, this national security, this security blanket in which the Liberal party is trying to wrap itself. It is the last refuge of a scoundrel of a government. I am not going to give it support unless something is done to improve vastly the safeguards that are there.

The hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville said that this is sunset legislation. What a joke! It is the sunset on civil liberties in Canada. It is another part of pulling the shades down over our civil liberties. That is our sunset. How many angels can dance on the tongue of a former dean of a law school that he would get up in his House and make the subtle little distinctions with regard to the law now before us. The sunset law, he says. It is to be in effect until a year after the McDonald royal commission reports, and then, if the House passes a resolution, it is to continue.