

Security Intelligence Service

Mr. Kaplan: Separation.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I am talking now about the amendment which was proposed by my colleague from Vancouver South (Mr. Fraser) with respect to a parliamentary oversight committee.

The Minister has contended—and we disagree with him—that this Bill consists of the creation of a security agency over which there will be enormous powers of review. For our part, we had the temerity to suggest that a committee of the House of Commons should be involved in that review process. Mr. Speaker, to suggest such an amendment is a startling departure from the principle of review I think would be difficult to sustain. I think this is a method of review which, in a free and democratic society, should be available. We should have the ability, armed with special powers, to scrutinize the activities of the agency. It is not because it is a House of Commons committee, but rather because it adds another dimension to the review of the agency. It is another protection of the civil liberties of Canadians, another protection for the people of Canada.

I believe that the motions which have been put forward by my colleague from Vancouver South cannot be considered as specious. They are propositions which have been put forward seriously. The basis upon which they have been put forward is that they have been debated, proposed and discussed in the course of all stages of the Bill. We have not as yet been able to convince the Government of the rightness of what we have proposed, as being proper amendments to this legislation. To be denied the opportunity at report stage, having regard to the fact that there has been time allocation imposed, I believe would not be understood by the average Canadian citizen.

I am proposing to you, Mr. Speaker, on a very solid legal basis, what I hope is a strong argument for you to accept the motions of my colleague. This is a political institution. As Speaker, you have notice of the interest there is in this country with respect to these issues. I think the Chair should exercise its discretion in favour of a full and free discussion of the issues which are of concern to Canadians.

When I addressed my preliminary remarks, I indicated that I was concerned about the very restrictive nature of your ruling. All of us who have had the opportunity to practice in the courts of this land understand the concept of equity. It is on that basis which I appeal to Your Honour. Equity dictates the emotions and the proposals which were put forward by the Hon. Member for Vancouver South and they should be accepted. I think you will find that will expedite the consideration of this legislation as opposed to causing any undue delay.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair will hear one representative of each of the Opposition Parties. Then the Chair will hear other Members. The Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson).

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I have had an opportunity carefully to—

Mr. Fraser: On a point of information, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does the Hon. Member for Vancouver South (Mr. Fraser) have a question which he wishes to put to the Chair?

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I understand the good sense of going to the other Party. However, I would hope the Chair is not suggesting that I will not be able to speak to this matter.

Mr. Speaker: No. The Chair has indicated that it would first hear one representative of each Party and then it would hear other Members. There is no intention on the part of the Chair to deny Hon. Members an opportunity to be heard on a matter as fundamental as this. The Hon. Member for Burnaby.

Mr. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, as you have indicated, we are dealing with a very fundamental question as to how we will approach debate at report stage on a most important piece of legislation, one which touches upon the most fundamental questions of civil liberties and the privacy of Canadians.

In prefacing my remarks with respect to the Speaker's preliminary ruling, the discussion on the legislation which we are dealing with today is attempting to arrive at an appropriate means of proceeding. I recognize that that is what the Chair has sought to accomplish as a means of facilitating orderly debate and ensuring that there will not be a repetition of the clause by clause debate which took place in committee. I fully understand that objective and it is one which is proper and appropriate at this stage of the proceedings. It is in that context that I will attempt to couch my remarks.

I must note, in determining how we will proceed at this stage of our deliberations, that I believe it to be appropriate that the Chair should take note of what took place in committee. I think it is proper for the Chair to consider that in determining what is a fair and equitable basis for proceeding in the House at report stage.

The Chair made a number of suggestions yesterday, I suppose out of frustration as much as anything else, to the effect that perhaps some Hon. Members were attempting to delay. I would like to assure the Chair that our objective in this Party is to have full and informed debate on the very fundamental issues which arise from this legislation. We are not attempting in any way to delay orderly debate on the legislation. I would note that it was only as a result of the introduction of a motion of closure, which would have denied any further debate in committee, and which was proposed by a member of the governing Party, that I felt it necessary, in order to preserve the democratic structure of the committee, to engage in what was unquestionably a dilatory tactic in committee. I would emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that that was following the tabling of the motion of closure by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Solicitor General (Mr. Gourde).

We are prepared to approach this debate in a spirit of good faith and in the spirit of giving reasonable consideration to the very fundamental questions which are raised. In that light, as I have indicated, it is appropriate that the Chair consider the