

*Communist Activities in Canada*

which explain my own views, and I think will explain the attitude I propose to adopt on this amendment.

I said at that time:

In the absence of these disruptive domestic influences—

And I was referring to communist influences.

—we must constantly ask ourselves what we shall do to minimize them and protect ourselves. The first answer to that question, I am sure, is that we should not be led into hasty or ill-considered action, either at home or abroad. The communists gain part of the victory if they mislead us into thinking that we must always take short cuts in dealing with them, for by so doing we may ourselves weaken the very political institutions which they are seeking to destroy. In endeavouring to destroy the influence of communism, therefore, we must be careful not to throw the baby out with the bath water.

We have always hesitated in this country, sensibly, I think, to make it unlawful either to hold political ideas or to establish organizations to express these ideas. We have reserved the penalties of the Criminal Code for those who by some overt act have threatened the peace and security of the country. I think that this particular democratic tradition is wise in both principle and practice. Once we make it a crime to hold political ideas merely because they are thought to be dangerous, it will then be but a short step to suppressing political ideas because they are not liked. And from a practical point of view, it always seems to me that there is much to be said for having people like the communists organizing in the light so that the public may know who they are and what they are doing, rather than to have them hidden underground. I agree, nevertheless, that the danger from international communism is presently such that we have to keep examining and re-examining ways of meeting that danger.

We are meeting it on the international level by arranging for collective action against an aggressor; by combining national forces and pooling national resources.

And this was the sentence quoted by the hon. member for Eglinton, who preceded me:

We must meet it on the domestic level by strengthening, if necessary, our Criminal Code against actions which threaten the security of the state; but, even more, by keeping our democratic society so healthy and strong that the germs of communism cannot breed in it.

Mr. Speaker, nothing that I have heard or seen since, and nothing I have heard in this discussion, has caused me to desire to change any single word of that statement. I suggest there are two approaches to this problem. One seems to be that embodied—and I hope I am not being unfair in this—in the amendment before us, that we should act now to strengthen the provisions of the law against communists and communism, in the terms of this amendment.

I am not supporting the amendment because I think that kind of action under present

circumstances is not called for. The amendment reads—and it has been pretty clearly explained to us by the hon. member for Eglinton:

This house is of the opinion that appropriate legislation should be introduced so that communist and similar activities in Canada may be made an offence punishable under the Criminal Code.

The question at once arises in our minds: What are the activities within the meaning of the amendment that would be activities similar to communist activities? It seems clear that the amendment does not refer to the outlawing of the communist party. I certainly gathered that from the remarks we have just heard from the hon. member for Eglinton (Mr. Fleming), who has said that it is not intended to interfere in any way with a person's beliefs or thoughts. Then we go on to ask ourselves whether under this amendment the statement of communist doctrines in word or in print by a member of the communist party would be an activity within the intention of the amendment. I do not know whether it is or not.

From the remarks of the hon. member for Eglinton I drew the inference that what would occur under this amendment would be a return of section 98 of the Criminal Code. As has been said already, that section was amended in 1936. I ask myself the question: Has communism increased in this country since that section was amended? My answer would be: No, it has not increased, it has decreased. I suggest that one reason for that is that Canada is a better country to live in now than it was in 1936. If we can continue to make it a better country in which to live I hope we shall not have to restore section 98.

But what has increased is the imperialistic might of the U.S.S.R. and the danger of imperialistic aggression from that source. It is difficult to exaggerate that danger. At the same time I suggest that we should not be misled by a consciousness of that danger into taking action in respect of domestic policies which would not be desirable otherwise. I suggest that we use the laws that we have when they are required to be used and they will be found to be adequate. I hope we shall refuse to throw overboard our liberty, remembering that communism is declining in free countries, including Canada. It is declining in our country because it is being beaten by the good sense, the loyal patriotism, the belief in liberty under the law of