at this stage but I would say that it is not a fixed position that will last for some time. I hope that we would get to the purist position as quickly as possible. I think that if we do adopt the principles of this bill, this will not give the police the opportunity to engage in massive or numerous wiretaps. I think that the police have within their power the techniques of combatting crime without the use of wiretaps and I would hope that such devices would be used only as a last resort.

The minister has pointed out that the basis for an authorization on an application to the judge is that other investigative measures have failed. When I think of the inefficiency of wiretapping, the possible corruption of wiretapping, the corrosiveness of wiretapping, I am very hesitant to give the police too much power. I would hope that we could have a police force within Canada which would use the ordinary techniques of investigation, which would be paid the highest possible salaries and which would perform with the highest possible efficiency. If they are going to rely on wiretapping as the main instrument for police investigative work, I have certain fears that those goals will not be achieved.

We in the New Democratic Party are prepared to accept the principle at this stage and to give the police the right to wiretap in certain circumstances but I am sure that we reserve the right in years to come to try to attain the position that the hon. member for New Westminster is asking for today. Therefore, speaking on behalf of the majority of members of our caucus, we will support the principle of the bill and reject the amendments set forth by the hon. member for New Westminster.

Mr. Ron Atkey (St. Paul's): Mr. Speaker, dealing with the group of amendments put forward by the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Leggatt), may I say on behalf of our party that we, too, find ourselves unable to agree with the rather courageous and forward-looking approach which he is attempting to take. In the extensive evidence that was laid before the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs at the hearings throughout June and July, I was surprised at the way in which the various police forces of this country came forward and honestly and openly disclosed the extent to which they had in the past engaged in electronic surveillance of various sorts. I was particularly impressed with the candor shown by the RCMP, and with the Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand), in revealing the extent of surveillance in both criminal opertions and security service operations which I believe heretofore had always remained a matter not for public consumption but a part of the internal intelligence or documentation of the Solicitor General's department.

I might say that I was also impressed with the open stance taken by the Montreal urban community police and their counsel, Mr. Jacques Dagenais, who did come forward and disclose the extent to which they relied on electronic surveillance and the methods used. While I certainly would not want to agree with some of their submissions on the form which the legislation before us should take, I think they are to be congratulated for their public spirit in coming forward and indicating what they had done and what they would like to do in the interests of law enforcement in the future.

[Mr. Gilbert.]

I was only disappointed that other police forces did not come forward in the standing committee of the previous parliament or of this parliament with the same sort of candor, forthrightness and openness that these two police forces did. In particular, I refer to the other large Canadian city, the police force of the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto. It did not see fit to come forward during the last parliament with the sort of candor for which one would hope. Indeed, it took some considerable effort on the part of the chairman, and other members of the committee in the last parliament, to extract from the chief of police of metropolitan Toronto the sort of information which committee members thought was necessary to reach the sort of decisions that they eventually reached.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I think there is enough evidence on record to show that the police forces of this country at all three levels, federal, municipal and provincial, require electronic surveillance as a means of law enforcement but under very controlled situations. Most of the argument in committee really concerned the nature, scope and extent of the control, but what has been termed the purist view, that we should not have any wiretapping at all legally authorized in this country, was clearly a minority position.

The position that I took, and my party took, in favouring controlled wiretapping by the police in certain circumstances was based not only on the evidence placed before us that this was indeed an effective means of law enforcement, but it was based on the practical realization that we legislators might set up a strict prohibition, a strict barrier to utilization of what otherwise might be seen as a necessary device in many ways. We may set up a system which would lead to flouting the law, bypassing the law, by those who, in the pursuit of their duties, may sometimes see a violation of the law as justifiable to achieve their ends; that is the apprehension and conviction of those engaged in criminal activity. It would be a sorry day in this country if we were to set up a law which might force law enforcement officers, and others in this country, to pursue a course of action which would in effect be a violation of the law.

Having said all that, Mr. Speaker, I do want to pay tribute to the courage of the hon. member for New Westminster who has put forward, so articulately, the purist view. I wish we lived in a society in which his view was the prevailing one. If we did, I might be one of the first to jump on board in support of his position. Indeed, if the situation which is contemplated in this legislation of controlled wiretapping by the police does not work out, if there are overzealous uses of wiretapping, overzealous authorizations by judges, overzealous applications granted by Attorneys General or their agents or Solicitors General and their agents and there is a compelling public outcry, which I think would ensue in this country which is always conscious of individual and fundamental freedom, then it may be that in five years time or eight years time we will move closer to the purer position advocated by the hon. member. In the event that there is the sort of abuse which I have suggested, which I hope will not occur, then I will be with him in support of the purer position.