

they are sold. I do not think there is a country in the world that sells atomic reactors to any other country in a deal that is made between one government and another which does not make the information readily available.

● (2010)

I am sure there are members on the government side who say that they believe in the right to privacy of the individual, and who believe that the dissemination of information by government agencies is highly desirable and even necessary in a democracy. But over the years the government has acted in quite the opposite way. With reference to the Nuremberg trials that took place in Germany, the German public in my opinion was largely responsible for the development in that country of totalitarianism, Nazism, and the abuses of fascism, by curtailing information given to the general public to such an extent that many of those who were on trial in Nuremberg were able to say that they did not know what was going on, and that they were not given information to allow them to make objections if they had wished to make them. I think this is an extreme example of the result of withholding information from the citizens of a country which would allow them, either through the due process of elections or through the establishment of some type of opposition, to put forth their views if they are aware of the facts.

Government members always say that to divulge this information would be detrimental to security and to the safety of the nation. They say it would be detrimental to our international trade. Why then is it not possible for the government, if it had the wish or the ability to divulge such very simple information as an indication of what our gas reserves are, to make this information public?

I am shocked when I find the general public saying that it does not matter if we have big cars or if we waste gas, or if we put on pollution controls which are not effective but which use up more gas, or if we do not insulate our houses sufficiently or turn down the heat, or if we do not conserve our industry resources, simply because they do not believe there is really a shortage of fossil fuel. They do not believe it because the government has never told the people what our reserves are. I do not believe that the civil service is so incompetent that it does not know what our reserves are. I am also of the opinion that the authorities are not so incompetent that they do not know that the oil companies are playing a game with them.

I am sure there are people on the National Energy Board who have a pretty good ballpark figure as to what our resources are. Yet we heard the gas and oil companies saying that our reserves were sufficient to last us for 100 years, but very shortly afterwards a crisis erupted, and then we were told that we have reserves only to last us for the next eight years. In fact our resources may be sufficient to last us for 20 years, but the government has never been able to tell that to the Canadian public.

Yes, I am sure there are people on the National Energy Board and in the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources who have a pretty good idea of what our resources are. The government does not tell us what they are because it wants the industry to have an advantage both when there is a shortage and when there is a surplus.

Statutory Instruments

So who is beaten? There are members of the House saying that they are not able to sell oil reserves in their areas and that this is causing lay-offs, and there other people who find that a resource is becoming very scarce in some other areas. All this is to the advantage of the oil industry. Either the government is totally dominated by the industry and by its friends in the establishment or it is totally incompetent.

An incompetent civil servant can put a stamp on a letter or a report saying "confidential", "for eye scrutiny only", and stating that the document must not be taken out of the room. If it is such a bad report the wisest thing may be not to let it out of the room so that nobody will read it, otherwise there will be all kinds of incompetent people making incompetent reports with other people analyzing them at great cost to the country. But if people can look at these reports, they can also make the decisions necessary.

One of the problems we have had in this country is that there have been incompetent people who have got into the habit of stamping every piece of paper confidential. Once these reports can be examined and assessed by the press, by members of parliament, and by the general public, the public will be able to reach a pretty good decision on their worth and can interpret their content.

There are many areas in which there is lack of information, and many reports are written which the government does not release because it says the information should not be divulged because that would not be in the interest of the department concerned. It says this about unemployment insurance, about manpower, and about reports from various other departments of which I have some knowledge.

When I telephone senior officials in these departments any day of any week, I find that they are holding a conference. I telephone the chairman, the deputy chairman, the heads of the departments, but they are all at the same damn meeting, all preparing confidential reports which only they can read, and they spend half their time at meetings discussing matters which they consider to be confidential. These reports might enable me to reach an opinion on the subject, but I am not allowed to see them.

The Liberal party has a new gimmick now which really delays everything. They say that a document cannot be released. The President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Chrétien) has this down pat. He says he cannot release any report now until it is prepared in two languages. So if a report cannot be held up for any other reason, one can say it will not be released for two months because of translation. There are all kinds of ways in which information can be kept from the public, but it seems to me that it does not make for a very informed public if these documents are not being released.

There is another factor to be considered. The press in this nation is often highly excited every time one of the cabinet ministers or one of his senior officials leaks a document. That makes it believe that this is an immensely important document, and as a result it is given more publicity than is warranted. If the government wants a document released as a kite, it always leaks it to the media, and the media give it all kinds of precedence which they would not give it otherwise.