

*Statements by Ministers*

**Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby):** Mr. Speaker, I would first echo the comments of my colleague the Hon. Member for York South—Weston (Mr. Nunziata) in thanking the Solicitor General (Mr. Beatty) for having provided me with an advanced copy of his new policy, as well as a briefing by his officials, which was most helpful.

The whole question of security clearances and the classification of documents is one that has been a matter of serious concern for a number of years. We have waited far too long for these important changes. In 1983 the head of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, Mr. Gordon Fairweather, appearing before a committee of the Senate said, "unnecessary security clearances, unnecessarily high levels of classification, and unnecessary snooping into the lives of individuals are not only wasteful of our resources, are not only morally repugnant, but they are discriminatory".

Those are strong words, and clearly in my view those words are merited by the current policy. What we must look at is the extent to which the new changes announced by the Minister in practice are going to get rid of this very serious attack on civil liberties, which is the basis of current policy in this area.

Cabinet Directive 35, which was dated in 1963, in fact was effectively superseded by the 1984 Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act. There is a mechanism for review of security clearances and so on.

In examining the early decisions of the Security Intelligence Review Committee on denials of security clearance, I must say that those decisions are not encouraging at all. The decision involving Mr. Andre Henrie, for example, or the decision involving Jack Gold, in both of those situations, was really quite disturbing in a free and democratic society.

It is when we examine the fine print of the Minister's proposal that I believe in many respects these proposals are giving the illusion of change. Unfortunately the discretion which is left to Deputy Ministers is so broad that there may be no effective change at all.

What are the definitions that the Minister relies on for the classification of documents? He relies on the definitions which are found in the access to information legislation. The definition sections in the access to information legislation have been criticized by witness after witness appearing before the Justice Committee as being far too sweeping, as, in effect, allowing the Government to hide any information it wants. Those are precisely the same definitions this Minister is using to classify government information. That is no progress at all.

What about the second major element, the definition that is to be used for security clearances? What we find the Minister saying is we will use the definition from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act of threats to the security to Canada. Once again, that definition is so broad, so openended that, in effect, those Canadians who are not engaging in any unlawful activity whatsoever could be targetted by it. If, for example, a Canadian sends money to a church group in South Africa which supports the African National Congress that individual

could be targetted under the definition of threats to the security of Canada.

By adopting the sweeping definitions in the access to information legislation, and the wide open definition in the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Bill on threats to the security of Canada, we have seen no effective change at all.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, these measures give only the illusion of change. The definitions used by the Government are so vague and allow so much discretion that there is no real change.

[*English*]

Two groups in particular affected in the past by the security clearance provisions will see no effective relief, or at least there is that possibility. Members of parties in this country that many of us might disagree with, but which are legal parties, are targeted still by this definition. The Communist Party of Canada, which is a legal party in Canada and which is entitled to run candidates, and indeed has elected candidates provincially and federally in the past, would deny a person a security clearance.

With respect to homosexuals, the old policy denied homosexuals the right to security clearances. I have a letter from the RCMP, Assistance Officer in Charge of Internal Security, who states that homosexuality is a reliability weakness identified in Cabinet Directive No. 35. There is no guarantee that that policy is being changed either, despite the recommendations of the equality rights Committee.

• (1520)

My concern about the announcement of the Minister is that we are really getting the illusion of change. What we are effectively seeing is smoke and mirrors, with no real substantial change at all. In fact, we may be moving backwards, because hidden in the Minister's announcement is a suggestion that much tighter control than is now the case will be exercised on the information being placed in secret and top secret categories. We are moving backward in this area, rather than moving forward with effective whistle-blower legislation, for example.

I am pleased that the Minister has eliminated the secret tape recording of public servants. I commend him for moving quickly on that once I drew it to his attention.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, I repeat, there has been no effective change.

[*English*]

The changes are largely illusory and the criticisms which were made by many Canadians, including the head of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, remain well founded. These provisions continue to be discriminatory and excessive.

Finally, I suggest that in view of the fundamental importance of these measures, they should be comprehensively