

Supply—Justice

seems to me this is a good opportunity now, when there is such a great deal of attention being paid to civil liberties, to talk about it.

● (8:30 p.m.)

As hon. gentlemen are quite aware the hon. member for Burnaby-Richmond just gave a speech on a matter which concerned him. I think he was complaining that this matter had not received attention in a long time. Perhaps if there was a great controversy or public discussion about something that was bothering him, that would be a good time for him to make some speech about the direction in which the government must go in dealing with these matters. That is why I felt I ought to make these few comments about civil liberties. This is a matter that is of great importance to me as I am sure it is to all members of the house. I have now sort of—

An hon. Member: Run out.

Mr. Cashin: If the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has a question perhaps he can go ahead and ask it now.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Chairman, there is a question I should like to ask the hon. member for St. John's West. When he was answering the hon. member for York South as to why the excellent principle he has enunciated should not be applied in this case, did I understand him correctly to say that the reason for not doing so now was that it would seem to be satisfying a political motive? At that point he gestured in the direction of the official opposition. Did he in fact say that the reason for not applying this excellent principle is that it would seem to be giving in to a demand from the opposition parties of this house? Is that the reason Mr. Spencer is to be denied the second look which the Prime Minister promised?

Mr. Cashin: Mr. Chairman, my answer is categorically no. I do not believe in changing a system to deal with one particular case. I am concerned primarily about the system which has been in effect for 20 years in this country. I do not suppose for one moment that I am now going to make a speech which will change that system here and now, making it retroactive. I am concerned with the situation 10 or 15 years from now and that which is involved in our approach. This sort of thing presents very difficult problems in a democracy.

It may well be, and I am prepared to admit this, Mr. Chairman, that the solution I have

put forward, or attempted to put forward, is not the most practical. There may even be cases similar to this under the change I have proposed. I do not know that, but perhaps there are other members who could really answer that question better than I,—and they may be some of the members on the front benches over here or on the other side who have dealt with these things before. Perhaps they are more aware of the difficulties involved, but it seemed to me from a distance that it would be good to make a few comments in this regard.

I might also say, because I am one who speaks at this time from the back rows, that some of the real importance in a long term sense of civil liberties has been overlooked in this debate, which is strictly and purely one to satisfy political motivations. I am not strongly questioning the members of the New Democratic party, because I do not know how they would have acted had they been in office.

Mr. Graftey: I wonder how this speech is going to look in *Hansard*?

Mr. Cashin: I can only assume that if they had been in office they would have carried out what they have said, in which case they probably would have acted differently from the Liberals or Conservatives. However, the point I really want to make is that in the past there has been no substantial difference between the attitudes of the two parties, and for the right hon. gentleman to suggest otherwise, that he would have dealt with this differently, is unrealistic.

Mr. Fairweather: Mr. Chairman, I have a question for the hon. member if he does not mind another interruption.

Mr. Cashin: I do not mind.

Mr. Fairweather: By this very moving account of the hon. member's belief in civil liberty, does he suggest there has been any equivalent experience in Canadian history where a minister of the Crown—the minister of justice for Canada—has gone on a national television program and stigmatized a citizen in an announcement such as that made by the present Minister of Justice? If so, what would my hon. friend do about this situation in the future?

Mr. Cashin: I do not accept the hon. member's premise. I saw a newspaper account, I believe in the *Globe and Mail* of November 4,