

Security Intelligence Service

before the House calls for, to a special committee, perhaps a committee of ten members? They might not be bogged down by the normal business of the Justice Committee—for instance, the estimates, the divorce Bill, the Criminal Code amending Bills which are very important and which may be referred to the Justice Committee. Would the Conservative Party and the NDP not see advantages in referring this matter to a special committee?

Mr. Friesen: First, Mr. Speaker, I do not carry high risk insurance so I will not speak on behalf of the NDP and what it is going to do. With respect to our position, I want to point out to the Minister—and our spokesman will carry our official position—that the debates in the House, because they are carried on national television, are very important to the people of Canada. Therefore, an open and wide debate is very important. To me it is very important that as many Canadians as possible hear and follow the debates daily and they ought to enjoy the privilege. I know there is a time lag between the currency of the debate and the time when the public responds to us as Members of Parliament. Therefore we owe it to them, without any talk of filibustering or short circuiting, to give them a chance to follow the debate. In terms of passing the Bill on to committee, I will let my spokesman speak to that.

● (1220)

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, I heard the comments of the Solicitor General (Mr. Kaplan) with respect to the way in which the Bill should be handled. He will know that we discussed in a general way some of the options available to us in terms of the progress of the Bill. As I said on Friday—and I repeat it today—the normal process is to have our respective House Leaders discuss the matter in terms of determining the appropriate committee which should deal with this legislation. Indeed, the Solicitor General put his finger on one of the problems which we face as parliamentarians with respect to this piece of legislation. I do not want to rehash this item. I raised it last Friday so that the people of Canada could understand precisely where we were in dealing with the legislation. This is the first time we have had a chance to debate a very sensitive and very important matter on the floor of the House of Commons. Accordingly, I am inclined to say that we should have a fair and reasonable debate.

Also in my remarks last Friday I said that we should have a fair and close scrutiny of the legislation. We should have an opportunity to examine it clause by clause and people should be able to respond to the new version of the security legislation. As the Solicitor General knows—and the Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson) raised it in his remarks—the Hon. Member for Durham-Northumberland (Mr. Lawrence) was the critic of the Solicitor General at the time Bill C-157 came in. He was clear and unequivocal with respect to the position which my Party took on the matter. It was a clear and serious assault on the civil liberties of Canadians.

Since I have assumed my important responsibilities as critic of the Solicitor General, I have not been at all reluctant to indicate clearly our concerns with respect to the new legisla-

tion. Of course, the Hon. Member for Burnaby spends more time now out in British Columbia for good and valid reasons in terms of the next election. Were he in the House of Commons dealing with the business at hand, he would have no illusions with respect to where my Party stands.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Herbert): Order, please. The Hon. Member will be aware that there should not be reference to the attendance or non-attendance of any Member. The remarks are rather indirect, I caution him, and I ask him to wrap it up as he has been speaking for a rather long time.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, I did not mean to cause any reflection upon the matter. I only assumed, because the Hon. Member for Burnaby did not know about what he was talking with respect to the position of my Party, that he was not here. That may have been a wrong assumption. Perhaps he was sitting in his place but was simply not paying attention to the position which my Leader and I have taken on this Bill.

Mr. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased the Hon. Member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn) suggested that we examine the record in the House of statements made with respect to Bill C-157. I challenge him to rise in his place and point to a single occasion in the House when his predecessor, the Hon. Member for Durham-Northumberland (Mr. Lawrence), now the justice critic for the Conservative Party, made any reference of a critical nature to Bill C-157.

Further I suggest that the Hon. Member might want to examine the record very carefully with respect to any alleged interventions by his Leader concerning Bill C-157. Again I challenge him to rise in his place during this ten-minute period to enlighten the House as to when it was that either his Leader or the Hon. Member for Durham-Northumberland, as official spokesperson of his Party, ever spoke on Bill C-157.

The Hon. Member for Saskatoon West is right. They were clear, they were unequivocal. They were clearly and unequivocally silent on that piece of legislation, and the record makes that very clear.

I would like to ask a question of the Hon. Member for Surrey-White Rock-North Delta (Mr. Friesen).

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Herbert): Order, please. I am sorry but the challenge will have to remain on the record as the period for questions and answers has expired.

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, it is noticeable that the Government is not taking part in this debate except to the extent of having the Solicitor General (Mr. Kaplan) and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Solicitor General (Mr. Tardif) contribute. I do not know whether members of the Government are fog-bound somewhere or whether they are just fog-bound here. In any event, it is strange that on a matter of this importance the Government has managed to prevent criticism of the Bill by its own Members.

Before it is too evident that I am critical of the Bill, I would like to hand out a bouquet, which I think is about enough. I