

Security Intelligence Service

terial responsibility? Was there any form of political acknowledgement that the politicians were at fault even to the slightest degree? Not one bit, Mr. Speaker. A commission was set up and millions and millions of taxpayers' dollars were spent all in the whitewash of political forces. We all know in our daily affairs and understanding of human beings that the RCMP would not have unilaterally and on its own committed that whole series of breaches if it did not have direction, authority and tacit approval from the government of the day. That is why Canadians believe the agency should remain with the force. People feel that the security service was betrayed and there was no such thing as ministerial responsibility.

Contrast our form of government, which is a responsible form of government where ministers are responsible—which we do not have—to that in the United Kingdom, the mother of Parliament. There ministers resign regularly because of errors and faults that occur within their departments. The rule of law and our form of government insists that the minister should resign. The Carrington affair, I suppose, is the classic one. A telegram arrived from the Falklands suggesting that there might be some activity in Argentina. No reasonable person would have acted differently from what the minister did. Yet when the Argentinians attacked, the minister was the first one to stand and say: "I know you would not blame me". Nevertheless ministerial responsibility insisted as a tradition that he step down, and he did so with great pride. That is what is lacking in this Government.

● (1115)

The second bottom line issue is that if there is a security agency, be it a civilian body or if it remains with the RCMP, what types of changes do we have to bring forth in order to balance the rights and fundamental freedoms won as a result of the battles fought and the lives sacrificed by our ancestors and be able as a state to collect information and get at security agents who we know are out there? We have an enormous Russian embassy and there are embassies of other governments as well which are looking into our internal affairs. Their goal is to undermine our very way of life. So we require the agency but we must have very careful discussions.

At some point this Bill has to go to committee. It cannot be decided upon quickly, as the Hon. Member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn) pointed out. Today is the second day that elected Members have had to discuss this entire issue. The Government claims that people have been discussing it for 15 years. It went to a Senate committee where over 40 changes were made to the original proposal. Nonetheless, this is only the second time it has been discussed in the House. We know from past experience that it takes several weeks, once the debate has commenced here, for Canadians to think about the issue generally and to get their views back to us as their elected representatives so that we can come to some conclusion as to how we should go. This is why I think there has to be a reasonable debate in the House on second reading and why the Bill has to go to committee. We have to get the experts back and have their views on the new proposals in Bill C-9. The

proposals are so different it is as if they have no relationship at all to the first proposal the Government brought forth.

As I looked through the Bill, I had some problems with the question of the mandate, whether it is actually clear enough. I would like to hear from the experts whether it is possible to have a definition of "espionage", for example, which is more precise than what is in the existing Bill, or what we really mean by "threats to the security of Canada". If it were ever taken to be an attack upon the possibility of a regional party being formed, such as the Parti Québécois, the Western Canada Concept or the Social Credit, I would be concerned because I believe it is wise for those regional alienations and those senses of frustration to be able to crystalize in a party which can then come to Parliament. Most often those parties are absorbed into the mainstream. I would cite the Progressives in the early part of this century and, more latterly, the Social Credit Party and the Creditistes. If they were somehow seen to be a threat to the security of Canada, I would be very concerned. I think we ought to look at that.

I honestly do not understand why only the Statistics Act has been exempted from the provisions of the Bill. I would like to ask many questions on that. Primarily, I want to be totally convinced that we are setting up, if the Government forces it through, an agency for which there will be ministerial responsibility. Just as the rule of law is fundamental, just as we have the right to responsible government, I want to have the right of ministerial responsibility. I will be looking at the Bill from that perspective.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the remarks of the Hon. Member for Lethbridge-Foothills (Mr. Thacker). At the conclusion of his speech, he indicated that he felt it was important that there be proper ministerial control and accountability over this important agency. Does the Hon. Member support the recommendation of the McDonald Commission which called for a parliamentary oversight committee similar to those in existence in West Germany and the United States to ensure parliamentary oversight of the activities of the new security agency?

● (1120)

Mr. Thacker: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that as a matter of principle, starting from a blank sheet, that would be a position that I would argue strongly as well. I think it should come from a group of people who are responsible to the people at large. When I say ministerial responsibility, I mean responsible not only to the Cabinet but to this House; but if it were in a committee of us, we are responsible to the people. If we do something wrong and they feel that it is wrong, they can turf us out. We have accountability every four years, or five years in the case of the existing Government. As a matter of principle, I agree. If we are going to move from that principle, I would want to be able to understand the good reasons and argument as to why it should go to a review committee of retired Privy Councillors, for example.