

*Minister's Statement on Security Group*

• (3:50 p.m.)

We want to know from the new personnel who have replaced these former liaison groups what formula they will use and what criteria they will use in passing on information from the RCMP to the cabinet and, above all, to make certain that the liberty of the subject is always protected and is not treated as totally expendable because of the state. As my leader said, who was quoted with approval and affection by the minister today:

What would be cause for grave concern would be any thought that much of the operation is beyond the ken of the ministry or the Prime Minister; that there are not ministers, elective and responsible members of government to whom the entire security operation is an open book, who have continuing access to everything that is going on in that area, and who give proper responsible, political, civilian direction to the operation on a continuing basis. None of us would want to see a security operation in this country running under its own steam and answerable only to itself—a government, so to speak, within the government.

When you analyse this statement, which was quoted with approval, it provides all the more reason this matter should be carefully considered by the committee. Is the minister's word sufficient to satisfy Parliament in this regard, especially when he has been so reluctant to tell us about this new headless group? Will this new headless group function with a formula and criteria having such high aims and objectives as the minister suggests? We sincerely hope it will, and I think we are entitled to be assured that it will. We do not want, of course, files on individuals and files particularly in reference to security matters to be used other than for the purposes of security.

In answering this statement, let me conclude by referring to page 8, paragraph 22 of the report of the royal commission on security. It reads in part:

Although the more moderate elements of the Quebec separatist movement have up till now been conducting a largely political campaign, it appears to us that there is in certain quarters a tendency to resort to activities that could well be regarded as seditious. What is more, there is no doubt about communist and Trotskyist interest and involvement in the movement.

That refers to elements of the separatist movement. The report goes on to say that if the activity is merely political, it is all right. The point I make now is that the government was warned much earlier than last fall, actually in 1969, but did nothing about it. This warning was in print, but the government stood idly by and did nothing. I think we must hear more than this statement, lengthy as it was, and full of verbiage, in order that we may be assured that this matter is free from suspicion today.

**Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood):** Mr. Speaker, the minister in his statement quite rightly said that a delicate balance must be sought between the rights of the state and the liberties of the individual. I suggest, therefore, that Parliament must not only be a jealous guardian of the state, but also a zealous protector of the rights of individual citizens. All too often, the first obligation is used as a pretext to disregard the second.

For this reason the members of this House who demanded an explanation of this new security machinery in the Solicitor General's department were entirely justified. The hesitant, dilatory and evasive attitude of the minister in the past led to suspicions which were very properly expressed about the whole project. Now that the

[Mr. Woolliams.]

minister has at last given an explanation to Parliament I can say, and I think I have been particularly concerned about the subject of civil liberties, I find nothing objectionable in the security planning and research group. Indeed, I welcome the proposal that information about security be channelled through a small group of civilian experts, advisory to the responsible minister.

In my experience such matters as security require, for their proper evaluation, an extensive political knowledge and a sound judgment. These qualities do not, as we have learned in the past, always exist in those who are trained as policemen. I entirely agree that civilian control in such delicate matters is essential. What is required is the ability to distinguish between radical proposals, new and dangerous thoughts which are entirely healthy and, indeed, essential to a dynamic society on the one hand, and activities directly related to violence against the state or against the individual on the other.

I hope the minister will report regularly to the parliamentary Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs on the activities, scope and size of this branch or group so that the committee on behalf of Parliament can ensure that what is starting out as a small, doubtless useful and necessary organization, does not in the course of time blossom out into something large and sinister.

[Translation]

**Mr. Léonel Beaudoin (Richmond):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. minister for having sent us in due time the text of his statement in English and French.

Mr. Speaker, my party has long been expecting the statement the Solicitor General has just made.

Referring to groups that are prepared to employ violence in achieving their ends, the Solicitor General said, and I quote:

The government must be enabled to act rather than to react to these groups—

The Solicitor General has thus aptly defined the policy any responsible government should follow and this, not only in connection with groups determined to overthrow it by force, but also towards the whole population.

The existence of such revolutionary groups, Mr. Speaker, proves that there is a concrete reaction to the present government and its methods of administration. If the government decided, once and for all, to govern this country with some practicality, not only reacting to the evils which befall us or result from its inefficient administration, but also working towards a better future for all Canadians, the statement which we have just heard would never have been made.

• (4:00 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, during the war measures debate, members of this party repeatedly expressed deep regret over the failure of the present government, as well as of its predecessors, to act before violence occurred. On November 30, 1970, I rose in this House on the matter of emergency powers and made the following statement, as recorded on page 1610 of Hansard:

We must not say that they take us by surprise. The government was well aware of the situation, had been for a long time, but nobody was courageous enough to say what was wrong and, above all, to apply the appropriate remedies.