

Some hon. members: Right on!

Mr. Bellehumeur: That being said, it may be necessary to look at the origin of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act to be able to understand the whole problem. You will see that it goes back to the commission of inquiry concerning certain activities of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, better known as the McDonald Commission, which published its report in 1981. The commission had been established in 1977 in the wake of a series of illegal acts and practices by the former security service of the RCMP.

The McDonald Commission had the mandate to look into illegal activities on the part of a supposedly reputable institution respected by the majority of English Canadians, and I am talking about the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, better known under the acronym RCMP. It is important to go back to the 70s to really understand the history of the secret service in Canada, but first, let us look at the act by which the Canadian secret service was created.

In 1966, the RCMP became the responsibility of the Solicitor General when it was given the status of a government department. Before that, the police force was under the authority of the Minister of Justice. The reorganization that took place in 1970 was the result of another royal commission of inquiry, the MacKenzie Commission, which published its report in 1969. The commission's main recommendation was to create a civilian security service. The commission considered it inappropriate to leave security functions to the ordinary police services, and the special operations branch did not have the complexity or the analysis expertise deemed necessary to play its role in security matters.

It also recommended that a bill be passed to authorize investigation methods like undercover operations, and to improve the security screening process, including the addition of an appeal procedure. Accordingly, a security intelligence service was established under a civilian director. Until then, you could tell RCMP agents by their red uniform, but security agents became less easily identifiable and then, I am sure you agree, unrecognizable.

Let us go back to the 1970s period when things went awry. Uniformed officers, unlike civilians, all had positions of power. At the end of the 1970s, for example, not a single civilian had a position above that of an officer in a planning or operations sub-branch. RCMP employees, therefore, wielded absolute power. Not only did they have police powers, but they were also had considerable leeway with the structure. Civilians knew almost nothing of what was going on in that section of the RCMP.

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Ironically, the same thing is happening in 1994 with the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, but this time, Parliament itself and the general public in Canada and Quebec are kept

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in the dark concerning our intelligence service. Questions are asked, but there are no real answers. The fact that elected representatives could not get near or watch the RCMP in those days led to wrongdoings. And believe me, there were a lot of wrongdoings.

The October crisis stunned everybody, both the Quebec population and the government. The then Prime Minister, Mr. Trudeau, did not know, when he invoked the War Measures Act, that he was unleashing a mad dog. I hope, and I would like to believe, that he was not aware of that.

The government realized that it knew very little about the sovereignty philosophy in Quebec. Therefore, it asked the RCMP to adopt an active strategy on that issue and to get all the information it could on the bad separatists.

In several cases and in various contexts, members of the security service committed extremely illegal acts and I think it is worth mentioning again some of the actions taken by the RCMP during those days. They set fire to a barn in order to prevent the so-called separatists or sovereignists from holding a meeting. They broke into the offices of a leftist news agency in Montreal, stole and destroyed files, broke into the offices of the Parti Quebecois, a legitimate political party, and even stole lists of members of that democratically recognized party.

When I think about those days, I still shiver with rage. It is a pitiful page in the history of Canada, especially when you see that one of the people involved, Mr. Normand Chamberland, who was accused of stealing dynamite at the time, has been promoted within the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and is now the Deputy Commissioner for Quebec, no less.

It seems that those responsible for enforcing the law can break it once in a while and even get rewarded for it. It is also important to note that the RCMP did not commit that kind of abuse only in the 1970s and only against separatists. The McDonald Commission indicated that other illegal activities had occurred, such as opening of mail, illegal access to supposedly confidential government information, planned prostitution, blackmail and other actions of that type which had been taking place for a long time with regard to various aspects of national security, from spying and counter-intelligence to subversion.

The main recommendation of the McDonald Report advocated the creation of a totally independent intelligence service of a civil nature and it did so for the same reasons as the MacKenzie Commission did, that is the need to restructure the agency with a view to collecting and analyzing data instead of using mainly deterrence and repression. Therefore, the mandate of the proposed new agency would be defined by legislation and the law would state clearly which threats to Canada's security the agency would be authorized to investigate. The definition would cover four areas: first, espionage and sabotage; second, foreign interference; third, political violence and terrorism; and