

*Official Secrets Act*

Act. They do not wish any of these things that could be brought about through a referendum.

But it seems the federal government will not listen. Its members are content with their formula. They care not that it will bring about a tyranny of the majority, because they know that it will open the door for them to turn Canada into a unitary state. But they are naive in thinking that they will be successful. The government will destroy the nation if it persists in its attempts, and this is what the people of my constituency fear more than anything.

The Prime Minister had the country sucked in in 1970, and he thinks he can suck the country in again in 1980. Well, he does not have me fooled, he does not have the people of the Peace River riding fooled and I am confident he does not have the people of Canada fooled.

The people of Canada want honest government. They do not want the Official Secrets Act as it now stands. They do not want one man or one party acting alone to change the constitution. They do not want any more propaganda on their television screens.

I think the time has come for this government to own up to the people. It is still not too late. It can still change its course; it can start right now by giving immediate approval to this motion. Let hon. members opposite reach into their consciences so that perhaps they may see the light, although it appears that too many years in power have forever dimmed the light of truth for the governing party of this country.

I would like to close by once again paying tribute to one of the greatest parliamentarians who has ever stood in this chamber. I think that Jed Baldwin is very happy that he is not here any more, that he does not have to put up with this government and its evil ways. But if he were here today, I know what it is he would tell this government. He would look hon. members opposite straight in the eye, and deliver his favourite quote from Scripture: "The truth shall set you free". In honour of this great man, I shall humbly repeat him: "The truth shall set you free".

**Mr. Neil Young (Beaches):** Mr. Speaker, the need to review the Official Secrets Act must be obvious to everyone. It is certainly obvious to the members of the New Democratic Party, and we urge the government to give its full support to the motion as do we in the New Democratic Party.

**Mr. Ron Irwin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Cooper) for his remarks in his maiden speech. It is my privilege today to address a few remarks to his motion, and I would like to repeat the motion because it is important.

That the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs be empowered to study the contents of the Official Secrets Act and to recommend any changes that the committee deems necessary, in order that the act would be limited in its application to enemy espionage and offences to national security.

A great deal of discussion has evolved around the Official Secrets Act, and just about everyone agrees there should be

major amendments and a major redefinition. As most hon. members are aware, there is a great similarity between our act and the English act, as they were both fostered in the same country. In 1972 the Franks report, which is an English report dealing with the English act, said the following in the opening statement:

The Official Secrets Acts have been in existence in this country for only eighty years.

The Franks report sets out a fundamental evolution that we tend to forget. It states that, and I quote:

—economic manoeuvres (of a country) have come to be considered no less vital to the basis of the life of the community than the movement of its troops.

We are talking economic war nowadays as well as atomic war and war by machines.

The Franks report also points out a second very important evolution with regard to the massive information we have now accumulated. There is a feeling that the government should safeguard the confidences of its citizens almost as strictly as it guards information of use to an enemy. It is staggering to the bureaucracies just how much information we do have about individuals, and there is an onus on us to use that information tactfully and for the purposes intended and not to make headlines for *The Toronto Sun*.

● (1620)

The Franks report sets out one of the more definitive sections which I have read on general issues. It states:

We have so far indicated these wider issues in the most general terms. But they can be more simply expressed. Even a democratic government requires a measure of secrecy for some of its functions, as a means whereby it can better carry out its duties on behalf of the people. Among the primary tasks of government are the defence of the nation from external threats, the maintenance of relations with the rest of the world and the preservation of law and order. Defence against external attack would be severely prejudiced if potential enemies had access, directly or indirectly, to the details of our plans and weapons. It would be impossible to negotiate with other countries if all discussion, however delicate, was conducted completely in the open. Some measures for the prevention or detection of crime would be ineffective if they were known to criminals. Some of the internal processes of government should be conducted in confidence if they are to result in effective policies.

Against this need for security, the report then goes on, at page 12, to give the other side of the coin, the need of citizens for openness by governments, when it states:

A government which pursues secret aims, or which operates in greater secrecy than the effective conduct of its proper functions requires, or which turns information services into propaganda agencies, will lose the trust of the people.

That is so true.

It will be countered by ill-formed and destructive criticism.

That is also true.

Its critics will try to break down all barriers erected to preserve secrecy, and they will disclose all that they can—

We have seen that happen.

—by whatever means, discover.

We have seen that happen.

As a result, matters will be revealed when they ought to remain secret in the interests of the nation.