

among others the Reverend Haddock, leader of Opus Dei in Canada, and a few lawyers.

Very early on an attitude prevailed within the committee, an attitude which all of us did not take but which did get the sometimes tacit approval of the majority of committee members, to wit: the committee—and the Senate, undoubtedly—does not have to question the relevance of Opus Dei tenets and its equivocal origins in Spain under Franco for whom the movement did feel genuine sympathy. Nor were we to be concerned over the many scandals which have highlighted the history of Opus Dei in Spain, France, Italy and elsewhere, scandals of a financial nature in most cases. We were to refuse to hear evidence from outstanding Catholics, priests and laymen alike, who vigorously denounced Opus Dei, even in Canada. We were to disregard serious complaints from Canadian parents whose young children have been indoctrinated by Opus Dei, much in the same manner as other children were indoctrinated by Moonists, Scientologists, Khrishnas or other bizarre cults. Nor were we even to hear the testimony of a former colleague, Jean Le Moyne, whose expertise in such matters has been acknowledged even by the Catholic hierarchy that had sought his advice about the position the Canadian Church should take during the Vatican II Council. In short, the committee could not have cared less and decided an examination of the legal aspect of the Opus Dei request would suffice.

I disagree. Senate committees have long been known to make in-depth studies, to go over the minute details of legislative measures with a fine-tooth comb. Allow me to use an example—extreme though it may be—to explain my thoughts. Let us imagine that Evangelist Swaggart or Bakker or, worse still, a successor of Reverend Jones—yes, he who was held responsible for the horrible Jonestown massacre in Guyana—had appeared before us and made the kind of request we have from Opus Dei. Would our reaction have been the same? Would we have said: It is a well-known church. At least one United States President, pious Jimmy Carter, publicly endorsed. It claims to be working to save souls, so we do not want to know anything more? After all, since Confederation we did grant the privilege of special legislation in 20 other like cases without asking too many questions. So a precedent does exist and it would be bad manners on our part to act more scrupulously towards a church, founded though it might be by a Swaggart, a Bakker or a Jones, on the pretence that its past is, to put it mildly, worrisome.

Honourable senators, I am sure you will agree with me that we would not have invoked precedents to limit ourselves exclusively to the legal aspect of the matter. Rightfully, we would have scrutinized every little detail with a magnifying glass, undoubtedly as we ought to have done in the 20 cases we refer to as precedents.

[English]

Why should the Canadian Senate give a certificate of approval, indirect as it may be, to the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei, an organization which is controversial both inside and outside the Roman Catholic Church?

Senator Le Moyne, Senator Corbin, Senator Gigantès and I and others have pointed out the troubling aspects of Opus Dei: the questionable preachings of its founder; its close association with the Franco government and with other fascist regimes like the Pinochet regime in Chile; the many controversies concerning its involvement in financial and political circles; its dubious recruitment practices and troubling rumours of flagellations and mortification. We felt it was necessary to be critical of Opus Dei and to make known certain aspects of the group asking for the passage of a private bill. As Senator Le Moyne stated in his speech on June 2, 1987, referring to our country:

We can speak here without undue exaggeration of a real mutation of human understanding, and conclude that as the essence of modernity, criticism constitutes the very legitimacy of the age. Thus is guaranteed the freedom we are now exercising.

If Opus Dei can exist in Canada because of the religious freedom we all value, we also have the right to criticize this organization and to put forward facts about it which might otherwise be overlooked. We all hate to be criticized, but we have to accept that at least some criticism may have validity. Opus Dei, however, deems any criticism of its work and history unacceptable and worthy only of violent denials. It dismisses our criticisms of Opus Dei as calumnies and our presentations as dishonest fabrications. Statements of fact concerning the questionable maxims of its founder, its close ties with Franco's fascist regime, the extent of its holdings, its unequivocal position within the right wing of the church and the opposition of most bishops, priests and parishioners to its methods and its arrogance are responded to in the same way as allegations concerning its approval of mortification, its involvement in financial and political scandals and its undue influence within the church. Opus Dei treats almost everything said against it as lies or manipulation of facts. As the Vatican Affairs writer for the *National Catholic Reporter* says in the February 6, 1988, edition of the *Tablet*, Opus Dei "denies that it is a 'movement' and, indeed, denies almost anything that is said about it".

Another Opus Dei tactic is to downplay the importance of statements concerning its activities. It will say: yes, we are in the conservative wing of the church, but we are not much involved in the debate over liberation theology and the church's dogma; yes, there are maxims calling for mortification, but today it is left up to the individual to decide; yes, we were around when Franco and other dictators were in power, but we had nothing to do with them; and, yes, we are represented throughout the world and have members in key positions, but we do not have much influence. Even if it admitted that there were excesses in the past, Opus Dei would be likely to say that it is unfair to judge it today by its past record.

But has Opus Dei really changed over the years? The answer is no. In Spain, for example, Opus Dei, while denying its involvement, is still, just as during Franco's regime, associated with the suppression of journalists and academics who do not favour its policies. Only this past November the