

Security Intelligence Service

● (1240)

This legislation is in front of us, Mr. Speaker, for a very good reason. During the 1970s it became very obvious that there was too much surveillance going on, too much lawbreaking going on, within the existing security set-up in this country. We found out through the McDonald Commission that there were files on over 800,000 Canadians. For every 30 citizens, man, woman and child, there is a file on one person. I do not believe, Mr. Speaker, that there are that many subversives in this nation. I do not believe there are that many people who even think about committing subversive acts. I do not believe that those average Canadians are a threat to the security of this nation. What this large number of files points out is that we do not have proper supervision of our security services in this nation.

What was suggested in a presentation before the McDonald Commission by our Leader, the Hon. Member for Oshawa (Mr. Broadbent), is that we must have adequate supervision, that there should be an all-Party parliamentary committee which would have a supervisory review role in determining whether or not our security service is acting on behalf of Canada or infringing the rights of Canadians.

This legislation which is now before us was described by one Conservative Member of Parliament as being too interested in the civil liberties of Canadians. This Bill which is before us in an infringement on the very rights of the average Canadian. We in this House have an obligation to speak up for Canadians. We have an obligation to make sure that passage of this very important legislation is not just granted by the quiet acquiescence of the majority who obviously have more votes. These are the same Members who are afraid to get up and speak in this House.

This is a very important piece of legislation. It is a threat to the civil liberties of most Canadians. That does not mean that everyone is going to have a Mountie or a security service person sneaking through their bedroom at night. However, it does create the potential danger to many Canadians of having their files opened by this agency without any adequate review of its actions.

American citizens have a committee in the United States representing different parties which has access to information on the actions of their security service. The West Germans, who are in a much more difficult situation because of the closeness of their border to a nation which is not necessarily friendly, also have that access. Surely if those nations can have all-party review of their security service, then the Canadian Government should be willing to allow that same review by a committee of this House. Obviously, Mr. Speaker, that would be a select committee. It would not be a committee on which, I suspect, every Hon. Member of Parliament would be serving; it would be a committee composed of the best people from all Parties. Government would still be in a position to choose from the persons suggested by the various Parties. It would be a very important committee, it would show the respect of the Government for the House of Commons and it would indicate

to Canadians that they could have more faith in their security system.

The legislation which is before us now has been condemned by the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and by the Conservative Attorneys General. It has been criticized by many throughout this land.

Mr. McDermid: What about the New Democratic Party Attorney General?

Mr. Murphy: The New Democratic Party Attorney General in the Province of Manitoba has condemned this legislation as well and has been in the forefront of the fight against unjust attacks on human rights. He is well known as a leading lawyer, teacher and instructor of lawyers and as a leading civil libertarian in this nation.

I realize, Mr. Speaker, with the closure motion before us that I have only a few seconds left to speak. I implore Hon. Members of the other two Parties of this House—we are certainly putting up every member of our caucus—to look at this legislation. Look at what you believe to be right in protecting the rights of Canadians. Do what you believe to be right in protecting the legitimate national interests of Canada. Certainly we need adequate protection from subversion and acts of terrorism, but let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, we can only protect ourselves in a democratic society if we ensure that the policeman is also policed. We can only do that if we have adequate safeguards with respect to actions which can take place, and which have taken place not 80 years, 90 years or 100 years ago, but in the last decade. When those illegal actions take place, those unwarranted actions, Hon. Members of this House of Commons should have access to that information through a select all-Party committee. Through that committee they would be able to inform the Canadian public of actions which were unwarranted. That committee could make sure that steps were taken to ensure that the rights of those 800,000 Canadians are being observed by those who are supposed to protect Canadian rights.

This is an important Bill and I believe we are running the risk of passing this legislation without any due concern for the rights of Canadian citizens. Ten years from now someone is going to ask where the Members of Parliament were when Bill C-9 was passed. Where were the Liberal Members who were in the majority at that time? Where were the Conservative Members when this legislation was passed through the House of Commons?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Herbert): Is the House ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

● (1250)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Herbert): Mr. Deniger, seconded by Mr. Evans, moves that—

[English]

Mr. Manly: Order, Mr. Speaker.