

Security Intelligence Service

That is only normal. It is human nature, if I may be permitted to say so. The Solicitor General may be being advised not to get too technical, not to put the service under too many constraints or to make their lives difficult. That is what political responsibility is all about. That is why, in our system of government, the Minister should stand up and say that although it may be difficult to carry this out and administer it, he is talking the political responsibility to show the people of Canada that never, while he is Solicitor General, will we have a country in which civil liberties will be trampled upon and free expression in support of democratic principles will be thwarted.

Where is the Liberal Party in terms of the freedom of Canadian citizens? Why is it silent? Why, except for the purpose of moving closure of this debate, are Government Members not standing up to defend their position if it is so defensible? They are silent because they have no defence.

As a western Canadian I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that as I speak to Canadian citizens in my part of the country I learn that this concept of a civilian security intelligence agency has caused apprehension. Liberal Governments have had the mentality that they know best, that people cannot be trusted, and that bureaucracy is everything. People often wonder why there was such an outcry when we questioned some of the moves that the Government has taken in terms of emergency planning legislation in peacetime, in terms of taking control of our communications and, by Order in Council, taking control of things which we thought were under the direction of Parliament. When the Government has that kind of mindset it is no wonder that it is prepared to resort to closure in order to trample the civil liberties of Canadians. This is not going to be forgotten by hundreds and thousands of Canadians who are going to be faced with the issue in the next election.

● (1550)

Mr. Blaine A. Thacker (Lethbridge-Foothills): Mr. Speaker, at the outset I must say that I am absolutely fed up with the process that is taking place here today. As a result of the Liberal leadership convention, I thought there was supposed to be a new Liberalism and a new approach. Particularly, the Liberals were going to be sensitive to the interests of western Canada. However, what do we find? When we return on Monday after the new leader was been briefed on Sunday, the Liberals are putting closure on a motion.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: It is a foreclosure on freedom.

Mr. Thacker: They are foreclosing freedom. It is absolutely abominable.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Herbert): Order. I must draw to the Hon. Member's attention the fact that we are not debating a motion to allocate hours; we are presently debating a series of motions, starting with No. 2. I would appreciate Hon. Members giving attention to the motion that is being debated.

Mr. Thacker: Mr. Speaker, we are essentially discussing the clause that deals with threats to the security of Canada. The

action of the Government this morning is a threat to the individual security of Canadians.

The RCMP has had a long history in this country. It is respected from shore to shore. Recent polls show that people have immense trust in the RCMP. Everyone knows that the RCMP were let down by the politicians.

While it is true that the RCMP burned some barns and broke into some offices, it did so at the impulse of the highest order in this country. When they were exposed, the politicians and Cabinet scurried for cover and left the RCMP to hang out on the line. In order to punish the RCMP it brought in this civilian agency to take that responsibility away from the RCMP.

The actions of the Government will destroy another major institutions in this country. It is an institution that people trusted. Of course, that is part of the Government plan. The Government will pay a bitter price. How will the Liberals be able to go to the west to ask for votes? How can they tell westerners to trust them when, the first day after they pick a new leader, they destroy the security agency of the RCMP?

Let me say why I am critically worried about the wording of these clauses. Clause 2 deals with threats to the security of Canada. It gives the definition of those threats but to truly understand it one must read Clause 12 first to see how they work together. Clause 12 states that "The service shall collect, by investigation or otherwise . . .". What does otherwise mean? The clause continues: "... information and intelligence respecting activities that may on reasonable grounds . . ." All the witnesses said that it should state "reasonable and probable grounds", which is a higher standard, before it can begin to collect information. However, the Government would not accept that amendment. It only states "... on reasonable grounds be suspected of constituting threats to the security of Canada"; and thereon it shall report and advise the Government, which is the Cabinet.

Once this security agency is in place it will collect information by investigation or otherwise. It will take information intelligence on activities. One must then look to see what "threats to the security of Canada" means. We all understand what "threat" is with respect to espionage or sabotage because in our modern world, particularly with Soviet agencies operating around the world, we must counter that. We understand its meaning when dealing with people who come from other countries with the intent to destroy our way of life. We have no trouble with its application to foreign-influenced activities or activities within or relating to Canada that will cause threats or violence to property or people. However, we are concerned about Clause 2(d). Clause 2(d) states:

activities directed toward undermining by covert unlawful acts, or directed toward or intended ultimately—

—to attack the constitutionally established system of government. The security service can interpret those words widely. For instance, if the Western Canada Concept said that it may have to separate if it does not get reasonable representation in the west, the security agency can say that that statement is