

*Archives of Canada*

kinds of things may be advanced by having access to this kind of material. The privacy of the people can be protected. This is so in other countries and in other jurisdictions. We would not want to see a blanket exemption that is really not necessary for the preservation of privacy. It would though be a very important impediment to keeping good records and making it possible for social history to be written and understood.

We received a number of representations from people who work in the area of archives who told us they are very keen to have this new legislation passed. The Social Science Federation of Canada, however, has raised some serious concerns. The Federation asks for amendments "to make this new Act more attuned to the spirit of Access to Information and the needs of the users of the Archives of Canada". It made reference very specifically to the problems I raised with regard to Clauses 5 and 6 that these were blanket exemptions.

The Association of B.C. Archivists raised concerns about the lack of the resources of the Archives to fulfil its mandate. That is not a matter that can be addressed in a Bill. The Association said it would like to see the Bill passed.

The Canadian Historical Association which represents 1,600 professional historians asks for speedy consideration of the Bill. Changes are long overdue. That Association raises some concerns about some amendments.

● (1440)

A number of individual historians have written expressing concerns, particularly about the possible destruction of historical records. One very distinguished political historian, Reginald Whittaker, said that what begins as an apparent exercise in entrusting all government records to its archivist, ends in creating a loophole which could be misused to undermine the intent of the sections. That indicates just how seriously this loophole is considered by the scholarly community which uses archives. They are really experts in this area and we should be listening to them.

I began my remarks with some consideration of the use of archives in ancient times and I would like to conclude with a few remarks about the present and possible future ages. The concern that records, in fact, record the truth remains. The great novelist, George Orwell, made Winston Smith, his hero in *1984*, an archivist. Winston Smith worked for Big Brother destroying inconvenient truths and substituting other, more convenient data. He was a hero, however, because he kept records of the truth at home. He wanted to preserve it.

What we need now is an act which will preserve our historical records and ensure, with adequate amendments, that the records are not destroyed or exempted improperly from the control of the Archives. I urge the Government to respond promptly and positively to the concerns raised by the scholars. If it does, I can assure the House of my support for this Bill.

**Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor):** Mr. Speaker, it is important to underline some of the points made by my colleague in this debate. As perhaps one of the few Members

of this House who has made use of the Archives here in Ottawa, and found them to be a tremendously valuable source for the economic research in which I was engaged, I find it very encouraging that the Government is bringing this Bill before us for discussion. The fact that the Archives have been governed by legislation passed almost 70 years ago perhaps indicates a lack of concern for the importance of the historical base of our country. I would like to see us counteract that by at least giving enough attention to the subject today on second reading so that we have a serious debate on the strengths and weaknesses of the Bill.

The Bill certainly has strengths. For the most part, it provides us with a new and streamlined structure for the Archives which I think will work well. Its weaknesses, however, are those which have, unfortunately, come to characterize this Government in a number of areas. The weaknesses have to do with access to information. In the matter of the free trade debate we have seen a constant struggle to try and hold back information from the public. We have seen government departments attempt to manage the news in the early part of the Government's mandate before it realized that that would be self-destructive.

While this Bill puts in place some potential problems, I think they can be corrected at committee stage so I do not want to get too passionate about them. Yet there are some serious gaps. This was pointed out to our caucus by concerned academics. They are the people, after all, who work with archives even though they are not, in the broader sense, the ones who benefit from the existence of archives.

I would like to now refer to some comments of the Social Science Federation of Canada. Social scientists of course include historians, economic historians, sociologists, political scientists and economists. All of those people must make use of the Archives as sources. Even physicists—

**Mr. Tupper:** Read paragraph two.

**Mr. Langdon:** Of what?

**Mr. Tupper:** Your document.

**Mr. Langdon:** My document is a letter from the Social Science Federation of Canada. Is that what you are referring to? The letter is the clearly stated view of the Federation, after looking carefully at the Bill, that it contains serious challenges to the spirit of access to information, as well as profound implications for academic scholarship. Yet the Government is apparently of the opinion that the Bill is uncontroversial and should pass through the legislative process with little or no discussion. That we question.

The Federation goes on to attempt to analyse the Bill and make a number of key points which have already been made by my colleague. The first is that the jurisdiction of the archivist will be limited to those institutions listed in Schedule I of the Access to Information Act and the schedule of the Privacy Act. We have recently had occasion to deal with the