

[Translation]

In spite of the initiative taken by the government, we are committed, as we have repeatedly stated in this House, to inform the commissioners, as well as any person entrusted with the administration of justice in Canada, of any facts or evidence related to the alleged breach of Canadian laws. Under that commitment, I have already referred two incidents to the federal inquiry commission and to the attorney general of the province of Quebec.

Today also I have reported to the authorities the alleged offences committed in 1973 and involving property belonging to the Parti Québécois. It appears that those allegations deal with the break-in into premises in Montreal, on January 9, 1973, where computer tapes listing members of the Parti Québécois as well as financial information were being kept. That operation was apparently authorized by senior officers of the security service. The information obtained in the course of that break-in were destroyed in the spring of 1975, after a new policy was implemented following the cabinet decision to which I referred.

The action taken in 1973 actually raises the very serious problem into which Parliament should be called to look. It is the dilemma, Mr. Speaker, facing any government or security service in the performance of their respective duties related to the security of our country under the present circumstances. The Royal Commission on Security identified that dilemma in its report published in 1969. The commissioners then stated: A security service is unavoidably involved in activities which run counter to the spirit, if not to the letter of the law, and in illegal or other activities which may seem to infringe upon individual rights.

[English]

It will be noted that the royal commission did not say that a security service must never be involved in any actions "that may contravene the spirit if not the letter of the law". It would have been easy for the royal commission to say that. The commissioners did not say it because they recognized the reality of the dilemma. We want effective protection of our national security. We also want respect for the law and respect for individual rights. But these desires—both legitimate—may be in conflict at times. At precisely what point should a security service refrain from taking action that it thinks important to meet its responsibility for national security in order to avoid any possibility of contravention of even the letter of the law? It is of very little help to transpose the dilemma to the level of ministers or government; the basic question remains the same.

It is because of this dilemma that I ask the House and the people of Canada not to be overly hasty in judgment of this case. The action was taken on the authority of officers whose motives were of the highest order and beyond any doubt. It was authorized and carried out in the absolute conviction that its sole object was to promote the security of Canada given the political and social climate prevailing in 1973.

None the less, it is a matter that I felt I must bring to the attention of parliament and of the appropriate authorities as

The Address—Mr. W. Baker

soon as information was received concerning it. But I do so in the hope that it will be considered in the context of the circumstances of five years ago and in the light of the dilemma to which I have referred. It is my profound hope, Mr. Speaker, that the royal commission of inquiry under Mr. Justice McDonald will, in its report, be able to assist the government and parliament in deciding, as precisely as possible, the type of legislative framework that must be given in future to those who are charged with maintaining our national security.

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, a few moments ago I asked the minister, prior to his rising to his feet, whether there was anything in what he was about to say, knowing that he was on the speakers' list, that ought to have been included in a statement on motions, so that members of this House would today have the opportunity to question him in accordance with our Standing Orders. But he said nothing. He sat there and said nothing. This, sir, is the second violation of the spirit and intent of the Standing Orders of this House. We laboured long and hard in the procedure and organization committee to bring to fruition some procedure for dealing with statements on motions, so that matters such as this, matters which the government says have just come to its attention but which occurred in—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. I should like to ask the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker), whether this is a point of order or a speech.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I was recognized by the Chair to make a speech and I am now entering into the debate. I was saying, matters which had just come to its attention—

Mr. Pinard: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): The Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) is rising on a point of order.

[Translation]

Mr. Pinard: I raise a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would like to know if the hon. member has had the opportunity to take part in this debate and if he spoke for 30 minutes.

[English]

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): It is a legitimate question. I did take part in the debate on the amendment. We are now on the main motion, so I do have the right to speak.

Mr. Friesen: I hope you are as careful about the rules with the RCMP.

Mr. Lefebvre: He is using his position to speak twice.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): That is right.

Mr. Lefebvre: Then why didn't you say so?

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Why didn't you ask? You have been here long enough.