

Access to Information

man suffered for five years out of his life. We finally got back his income tax; National Revenue gave him back the money. The province of Ontario gave him back the money they had taken for the fines and returned his driver's licence. Finally, we got his wallet back with his original documents from the FBI, believe it or not. He went back into the work force and now he is gainfully employed with a new social insurance number. He is a very happy young man today. I thought it would be worthwhile to put those few remarks on the record for the benefit of my colleagues who were not here at the time and for the benefit of the officials of the minister who are sitting in the gallery.

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, a few moments ago the parliamentary secretary expressed a wish that this bill would pass unanimously. I want to take just five minutes to indicate a few examples of what is wrong with the bill and to show why we cannot vote for it.

Members will know that under the provisions of the United States freedom of information act, FBI and CIA files from the 1950s and the 1960s have been made available to people and to organizations. In a recent autobiography which John Kenneth Galbraith published, it is obvious that he had access to the FBI files on his own records. We know from the McDonald Commission that the RCMP has 700,000 files on individuals. Also we know from experience that some Members of Parliament, many trade union leaders and many farm leaders are among the people in those files. On one occasion I asked the Solicitor General (Mr. Kaplan) privately whether after this bill was passed people could obtain access and see what was in the files about them. He told me that they could not. I am talking about after this bill is enacted.

Professor Jim Penton of the University of Lethbridge was writing a book about religion a couple of years ago. He wanted to report in the book about the Doukhobors and about the assassination of Peter Veregin, the then leader of the Freedomite Doukhobors. Peter Veregin was assassinated in the early 1920s, more than 60 years ago. Professor Penton went to the RCMP asked for and was refused access to their files. Professor David Bercuson of the University of Calgary, a well-known labour historian in this country, told me this morning that one of his M.A. students was working on the history of the communist party in Alberta in the 1920s. It is common knowledge that the RCMP at that time had infiltrated and was keeping a very close tab on radical organizations in those days, on the communist party, on trade unions and on farm organizations. I am not questioning what they did, but we are talking about a period more than 50 years ago. When this student asked the RCMP whether she could look at the files concerning what was done in the 1920s, she was given access to only 15 or 20 pages of material. Professor Bercuson said that what amazed him and his colleagues was that she obtained that much. We can compare that with the tens of thousands of pages of recent FBI and CIA files from the 1950's and 1960's which were made public; people who felt rightly or wrongly that they had been mistreated by government agencies were given access to the files. One of the reasons we considered this bill not to be a

good beginning was that it does not give Canadians these same rights.

We consider the bill to be largely a hoax. The Liberal government is doing as it so frequently does—it is giving the appearance of giving people what they want or giving people what there is a broad consensus on, when in fact it is doing nothing of the kind. We are not prepared to vote for a bill which we believe to a large extent to be a hoax. The Conservative Party opposed important provisions of this bill when it was in government and in opposition. We are surprised that members of that party will now vote for it.

I should like to refer for a moment or two to a committee report of this year wherein the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker) referred to this bill. He said, "You have gutted judicial review and you should know that." He ended by saying, "You have poisoned it. It is a body blow to access of information." If I had more time I could go into greater detail about what the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton said. However, having said all that, and having shown how inadequate the bill is, the member for Nepean-Carleton, as well as other members of the official opposition, are prepared to vote for the bill.

● (1740)

We in our party are not prepared to vote for a bill which will not accomplish anything. It will only give the ministers of the government and the senior bureaucrats about as much power as they have always had to keep from the public whatever information they desire secret. We are not prepared to cooperate with the government or the official opposition to allow them to do that.

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

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There have been some discussions, albeit inconclusive, between myself, the government House leader and the acting House leader for the New Democratic Party. We discussed deferring the votes at report stage and third reading on this measure until next Monday, and, in addition, that we defer the vote on the NDP amendment on the budget, which is ordinarily to arise on Wednesday next, also until next Monday.

I would hope that that proposal could find some responsiveness in the spirit of co-operation with the government House leader. We made that proposal because if we get into a long voting procedure tonight—by my calculation there are some 17 votes that are possible—it would manifestly eat into the time available to us, thus delaying the eight o'clock commencement of the budget statement by the minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen). We do not want to do that. We want to hear that statement at eight o'clock. If we commence the voting procedure now, I do not know how many votes the NDP will be standing us on.

To me, it would seem that the reasonable and logical course to follow would be to defer all votes until next Monday, in the