

I do not want to speak for too long because I know that the hon. member for Ottawa West wishes to make a few remarks. However, I do want to point out that part of the motion refers to the fact that, in the case of Peter Worthington of the Toronto *Sun*, there has been harassment.

When we talk about harassment, there are two ways to look at it. Without getting involved in the merits of this particular case, actual prosecutorial actions have been taken against the Toronto *Sun*. Some say that this is an isolated incident, but this is not the first time Mr. Worthington and the Toronto *Sun* have been threatened under the Official Secrets Act. Hon. members will recall that a little more than two years ago, on May 7, 1976, the Prime Minister of this country was ranting and raving in this House about an attempt on the part of the media to discredit him. He said the following in this House:

I think it is of concern to every member of the House, too, that a leak which is obviously destined to destroy my reputation and credibility should have been deliberately put into the hands of the press and treated that way by the press.

The Prime Minister was referring to a letter, as hon. members will recall, which was from General Dare, the head of the security section, to his deputy. The Prime Minister was in hot flight after the press and after the Toronto *Sun* particularly. What he said about the Toronto *Sun* almost prohibits repetition in this place.

While the Prime Minister was carrying this on, by mere coincidence four RCMP officers swooped into the offices of the Toronto *Sun*, demanded copies of the correspondence and threatened Mr. Worthington under the Official Secrets Act. That is the kind of use to which the Official Secrets Act has been put on a previous occasion.

What has happened in this instance? The Prime Minister talks about rights of individuals and democratic principles, but we all recall that not too long ago the Prime Minister stood in this House and, in effect, charged, tried and convicted on public television a member of this House with respect to the alleged possession of certain documents, as well as Mr. Worthington and the Toronto *Sun*. What basic precepts or concepts of freedom and principles of justice does the Prime Minister have when under the protection of this House he advises everybody in public that these are secret documents and that there has been a breach of the Official Secrets Act? Where do we go from there? There is no charge against the hon. member for Leeds (Mr. Cossitt). Is there a charge against the CTV network which carried the essence of those documents and the story? I do not recall there being any charge laid against that network.

Is there a charge against any other newspaper in this country? No. Only Mr. Worthington and the Toronto *Sun* were charged. Mr. Speaker, I am talking about harassment by selective prosecution. Without going into the merits of the thing, I simply ask you, as an independent observer, what conclusions can be drawn from that situation.

#### *Official Secrets Act*

I want to conclude on that note. I am sorry; I did not realize what the time was. I know the hon. member for Ottawa West does want to speak briefly and conclude this debate, but I appreciate the time I have been given.

**Mr. Lloyd Francis (Ottawa West):** Mr. Speaker, in the very brief time—some two minutes or so—remaining to me I want to go on record as supporting the principle of referral of the Official Secrets Act to a committee of investigation. I am not prepared in any way to comment or pass judgment on the way in which the existing law has been applied in the cases under it. It seems to me that previous speakers have explained in some detail the law as it stands.

**Mr. Prud'homme:** I share your opinion.

**Mr. Francis:** I know some of my colleagues to my right share the opinion I am expressing now. The hon. member for Saint-Denis (Mr. Prud'homme) is one of them.

On only one or two occasions have I had reason to be familiar with the provisions of the Official Secrets Act. I remember that in 1975 the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid) was charged by a newspaper, the Montreal *Gazette*—it was really quite an incredible situation—with having disclosed some features which were allegedly contained in a budget, which would have been the basis of a violation of the Official Secrets Act.

The charge led to hearings before the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, and the findings were as one might have predicted. There really was not much to substantiate the charge of the Montreal *Gazette*. However, if the effect of the Official Secrets Act is to restrict access to information, the context in which the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) has set the debate today, then along with other hon. members I can only express the wish that we have it reviewed and that we will proceed to a freedom of information act.

Speaking earlier in this debate the Secretary of State (Mr. Roberts) undertook that, at the beginning of the next session, he hoped to have a bill to present to this House. I welcome that very much. Those of us who have examined the green paper on freedom of access to information have found that it really is not strong enough, as far as I am concerned, in many areas. I for one prefer to have a judicial review to determine whether papers should be accessible through a federal court.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier):** Order, please. It being five o'clock, it is my duty to declare, pursuant to Standing Order 58(11), that the proceedings on the motion have expired.

Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until two o'clock on Monday afternoon.

At 5 p.m. the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.