

Archives of Canada

I was disappointed to see the Parliamentary Secretary start to defend the notion that there are many documents which would have to be secret and confidential and would not properly be in the Archives. I am sorry to see that happening already. There are exemptions already, but I wonder how extensive those exemptions should be.

For example, we know that the RCMP keeps as confidential files on the Winnipeg general strike of 1919, a very long time ago. It is difficult to imagine that there are current security matters which could be jeopardized from files dating back to that period of time. Certainly we have agencies which are excessive in how they define what material has to be kept away from the public and from the Archives.

I also think it is improper to raise the question about the files of Members of Parliament. We are talking about ministerial records, the records of Ministers of the Crown who are doing public business. The current definitions of "personal" and "political" papers being exempt are improper. One could imagine a narrow definition of "personal" being acceptable. However, other countries have addressed the problem more successfully than we have. Of course this wide open exemption for political records would be entirely unacceptable.

● (1550)

Mr. Nickerson: Mr. Speaker, at one time this nation used to be known as the Dominion of Canada. It has now become customary to remove that term "Dominion" wherever it is to be found. I do not know why this has been done, but I have observed that the impetus comes largely from the Province of Quebec. Be that as it may, Sir, I would like to add my comments to those of the Hon. Member for Nepean—Carleton (Mr. Tupper). It would seem right to me that for historical purposes, if nothing else, the term "Dominion" should be retained somewhere. It makes sense to retain it for the Dominion Archivist. It makes sense not to change that name if for no other reason than that it has that right historic, archaic and anachronistic ring to it.

Mr. Berger: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I understand the question and comment period was put into our rules to facilitate debate between Members on both sides of the House and to allow Members from another Party a comment on remarks made by a speaker during his or her 20-minute time period. The Hon. Member has referred to comments made half an hour ago by another Member, and I do not think that falls within the spirit of our rules.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): That is a point of debate. I will hear the Hon. Member for Western Arctic (Mr. Nickerson).

Mr. Nickerson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order, on that very matter that was referred to by the Hon.

Member for Laurier (Mr. Berger). He referred to the change of name in his presentation to this very House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments are now terminated. Debate.

Mr. David Daubney (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate on Bill C-95. The national Archives are an important and vital part of any sovereign state's nationhood. I am pleased to see the following codified in Clause 4 of this Bill:

the objects and functions of the archives of Canada to preserve private and public records of national significance and facilitate access thereto.

As a Member of Parliament with a degree in history from Queen's University, a fine institution whose own archives are an excellent example of many of the private archival institutions found throughout this country, and as a former user of those facilities as well as the Public Archives of Canada and as a Member whose interest in Canadian history continues, I am extremely pleased to support this Bill on second reading today.

I congratulate the Minister of Communications (Mr. Masse) for introducing the Bill and for his excellent speech. The Bill is not perfect but it is a great step forward from the *status quo*. A number of suggested improvements have already been articulated this afternoon, and I am sure in the clause by clause proceedings in the legislative committee on this Bill some improvements to the legislation can be made.

I would like to comment on the interjection made by the Hon. Member for Western Arctic (Mr. Nickerson) on the word "Dominion". I must share with you, Mr. Speaker, and again I am speaking largely as one who has some sense of Canadian history, that I too feel some regret at the disappearance of the word "Dominion" from so many of our institutions in Canada. We have another example today in Clause 3 which establishes the Archives of Canada which is to be under the direction of the Archivist of Canada. I am disappointed that in this vehicle for keeping our historic records the Bill will have the effect of doing away with the full title of Dominion Archivist. As one of the more impressive members of the Senate of Canada, certainly on the Liberal side, former Senator Eugene Forsey has pointed out on a number of occasions that the word "Dominion" is very much a Canadian word.

Mr. Boudria: It is in Psalm 72 of the The Bible.

Mr. Daubney: As well as a biblical word, as pointed out by the Member opposite. It is a fine Canadian word and I think it is a shame that it is slowly and gradually, somewhat insidiously disappearing from our vocabulary.

I have had the pleasure of attending, as a local Member of Parliament, the National Gallery and the Public Archives not just as a student of history but recently to meet several of the hard working local archivists, many of whom are constituents