

Criminal Code

General (Mr. Blais) or those who come after him the authority to issue those warrants. I hope this provision will be changed in committee. If those warrants, under national security, are to be issued they should be issued in the same manner as a warrant under the privacy act for electronic surveillance on the telephone or for the opening of mail when investigating drug traffic in Canada.

It may be claimed that national security is a different field and, therefore, the powers should be given to the executive rather than the judiciary because the matter is highly confidential and we must always protect classified information. There may be some merit to that argument but I have great faith in the judiciary of this country. On the whole, over the years we have appointed good people to the various benches, whether District Court, the Supreme Court trial division, the Appeal Court, the Supreme Court of Canada, or the Federal Court. I think with very few exceptions they are people of great integrity, intelligence and compassion. I think they have the capacity to keep matters confidential.

Surely one could apply to a judge for a warrant. Maybe all the facts of classified information would not have to be set out, although I am sure a judge who takes an oath of allegiance to the Queen—not to the government—to do a proper job without discrimination of any kind, would be able to keep information confidential. That is a positive suggestion, Mr. Speaker, and I hope the government will give it serious consideration if and when this bill goes to committee. I am prepared to make such an amendment in committee. I hope my amendment does not fall like the seeds and the stones from the sower of the seeds in the Bible and fail to germinate or sprout because there are always too many Grits to vote me down on my positive suggestions. I am usually told a few minutes later that I do not come out with anything positive, it having been thrown in the waste basket by the Grits in question.

I want to deal with something that really frightens me, Mr. Speaker. I want to read from the report of the Solicitor General of Canada issued pursuant to section 178.22 of the Criminal Code of Canada. This covers the period from January 1, 1977 to December 31, 1977. The number of wiretap authorizations obtained under the Criminal Code was 589; wiretap authorizations under the Narcotics Control Act, 1344; under the Food and Drug Act, 197; under the Customs Act, 24; under the Excise Act, 9; and under the Bankruptcy Act, 1. The total authorization for that year was 2,164. The amount is going up like inflation, Mr. Speaker. There were 879 persons arrested whose identities became known through wiretaps. Out of 2,164 wiretaps, approximately one-third were arrested.

There is something else I wanted to put on record regarding the issuing of warrants authorized by a judge. As the hon. member for St. John's West said, we cannot find out the facts about these warrants that were issued by the Solicitor General. He accused the minister of being blindfolded but I do not know whether that is correct. However, only 28 persons were convicted as a result of wiretap information. Mr. Speaker, that is 28 convictions out of 2,164 wiretaps. That is quite a thunderstorm, but I suggest the result is a mere shower.

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): How many of the investigations are still going on?

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Speaker, that was the story last year. One thing about the Liberals, they never change their philosophy or their policy. Their policy is power. That very question was put to me a year ago when I was speaking in this House.

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): Answer it now.

Mr. Woolliams: All right, I will. Last year they said there would be a carryover. That is included in the 28. There is a carryover every year but it does not really affect the result, except for one or two. I hope that answers the hon. member satisfactorily.

Mrs. Holt: It is also justice not to charge if you have not complete evidence.

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to argue. I hope my good friends make their own speeches. I came here with the facts, but when you talk facts to the Liberals they just cannot take the truth.

Let us look at something else now. These are not my figures, they come from the Solicitor General's office.

Mrs. Holt: Because he is an honest person.

Mr. Woolliams: I am not going to get into whether he is honest or dishonest or what he is. I wish my good friend from Vancouver, whom I always give a good hearing in committee and in the House, would restrain herself. I know she gets frustrated sitting there because she does not go along with many things that happen. Sometimes she explodes in committee because of that frustration. If she could only restrain herself for a few moments, it would be a great help to all concerned.

I should like to refer to the Solicitor General's report again. Referring to the Official Secrets Act, it shows that 471 warrants were issued by the Solicitor General. The average length of time—

Mr. MacFarlane: Was it 472?

Mr. Woolliams: I did not know the hon. member wanted to be included. I will see that is done next year. The Liberal whip said it should have been 472. Perhaps he has some inside information about himself that I do not have. I hope he will go to Hamilton and get himself a good lawyer this afternoon!

Mr. MacFarlane: I thought they had missed you!

Mr. Woolliams: The average length of time for the warrants was 244.55 days. That is out of 471 warrants. Aside from the case in Montreal the report is secret and silent about how many arrests and charges there were. I know of only one case, and I do not know whether wire-tapping was used in that Montreal case or not. Even if it was, there was only one conviction out of 471 listenings conducted under the Official Secrets Act. The figures on both sides of the fence, whether