

The Review of the CSIS Act and the Security Offences Act

Appearance of J.B. Seaborn before the Special Committee of the House of Commons, February 20, 1990.

It may be helpful, Mr. Chairman, if at the outset, I were to make a brief statement to set out some of my own views on a number of the questions which have been raised at earlier meetings of this Committee and which appear to be of continuing interest to the members.

I was not involved in the events leading up to the creation of CSIS as a security intelligence service separate from the RCMP, nor in the drafting and passage of the legislation which is now before you for examination. I was, in fact, engaged in work very far removed from what seems at times the rather arcane world of security and intelligence.

Looking back at those events and the decisions which were taken to try to avoid past abuses, however, it seems to me, after very close association with security and intelligence matters over more than four years, that:

- (a) the decision to create a separate, civilian internal security service for Canada was the right one, despite the admitted and predictable difficulties which dogged the new organization for the first couple of years;
- (b) a reasonable balance was struck in the legislation between meeting the needs of the state for security intelligence, and protecting the rights and freedoms of the individual in