

Mr. Winnick

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There was a minority report.

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Mr. Hurd

The hon. Member would not deny that that was the conclusion of the Committee.

It is not sensible to define subversion only in terms of those who breach the criminal law. We must be able to know the plans and intentions of those who abuse the freedom that we provide under the law to infiltrate our institutions and structures. Under the definition, however, the Security Service can take an interest only in people who have a deliberate purpose and intent to undermine parliamentary democracy and who also represent a real threat to the security of the nation.

The definition is not as wide as some imagine. It is not enough that someone's actions may have the unintended effect of weakening parliamentary democracy. There must be a deliberate intention. It is not enough to have that intention if it presents no current substantial threat. Such people must represent a real threat to the security of the nation, and must intend to do so. That is a fairly narrow and precise definition.

The Security Service is not interested in the normal and proper conduct of the trade unions of this country; it is not interested in thwarting those who seek to persuade others that Government policies—including this Government's policies—are wrong or that their priorities are wrong. It is not interested in those who join together to make their views heard on, for example, the environment or on our defence policies. It is interested in any who might collectively or individually, overtly or clandestinely, be planning the deliberate overthrow of our parliamentary democracy and in doing so present a real threat to our security and safety. Those who think that such

people could not exist are ill-informed. Those who think that the Security Service imagines that such people are everywhere are plain wrong.

I ask the House to recognise that clauses 1 and 2 have been carefully drafted to ensure that the Security Service is able to continue to protect the nation as a whole, and to give Parliament a clear indication of its principal concerns. The Security Service cannot get involved in lesser objectives, nor can it obtain or disclose information for lesser objectives. Nor, under clause 2(2) from which I have already quoted, can it take action intended to further the interests of any political party, including the party of the Government of the day. Those are all strong safeguards, proposed for the first time in statute, against the Security Service seeking to act outside its functions or against any Government seeking to put improper pressure on the director-general to do so.

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Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South)

Many of us are worried about the meaning of the words

"undermine parliamentary democracy by political, industrial... means",

since the final arbiter will be the Secretary of State reporting to the Prime Minister, not to any Committee of the House. We would do well to keep in mind when we use the words "political" or "industrial" the fact that the Prime Minister described the miners as enemies of the state. Given that kind of definition, what trust can we have in those words?

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Mr. Hurd