

**Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton)**[Previous](#)[Top](#)[Next](#)

In the book "One Girl's War", the lady concerned says that she and other officers broke into the home of R. Palme Dutt because they understood that the main secrets of the Communist party were kept under his bed. When they examined the box under his bed, they found that it contained his marriage lines. That was the great secret that he kept. The point is that they broke into his home, just as they have broken into and bugged the homes of many other politicians and political people. The Home Secretary says that the service will be politically neutral from now on. Can he assure us that, from now on, people who express political opposition will never be subjected to that sort of thing again?

[Share](#)**Mr. Hurd**

The hon. Gentleman is being offered not an assurance from me but a Bill. We are putting these matters on the statute book for the first time. I do not intend to enter into details of what has happened in the past, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will read the passages in the Bill that are relevant to his point.

[Share](#)**Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook)**

The Home Secretary said that clause 1 explicitly excluded any political bias in the service. Will he read us the words that provide that?

[Share](#)**Mr. Hurd**

I referred to clauses 1 and 2. clause 2(2)(b) says that it shall be the duty of the director-general to ensure

“that the Service does not take any action to further the interests of any political party.”

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That is a precise and accurate answer to the right hon. Gentleman's question.

I was dealing with the first and, at the moment, dominant role of the Security Service. I shall deal with subversion in a moment, because I know that that is the aspect that most perturbs Opposition Members.

As regards espionage, there is not much doubt about the principle involved. During the years since the war, the Security Service has provided information that has led to the possibility of successful and decisive action against hostile intelligence agents in this country. We continue to face other threats from outside the country, which relate to those who would weaken our defences, threaten our economy and suborn those whom we trust with our secrets. Here again, the service exists to protect us.

I know that one aspect that worries one of my predecessors, the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) is counter-subversion. I do not doubt that the Security Service must be able, within the limits set out in the Bill, to undertake that task. I have no doubt—we have considered the matter many times—that the definition of subversion given by Lord Harris of Greenwich in 1975 and endorsed by the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South as Home Secretary was the right one.

I am not alone in reaching that conclusion. The matter was considered by the Select Committee on Home Affairs in the 1984–85 Session. The Committee was considering police special branches and it accepted that the Harris definition was broadly correct.

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