



Monday, December 1, 2014

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S E C R E T  
IA195-8-25

1. Weekly Hilites Submissions:

- (1) THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CANADA CONTINUES ITS INFILTRATION OF THE COUNCIL OF CANADIANS - This hilite was drafted in response to a request from the Minister. This item will be held until the question of infiltration is more clear.
- (2) THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CANADA (CP OF C) IS USING THE CANADIAN PEACE CONGRESS (CPC) AS A PLATFORM FOR THE NEXT FEDERAL ELECTION - This item is useful as a hilite. It will be a future DIR.

## '86 Cabinet Put Trade Critics Under Surveillance: 'Creepy'

Cabinet secretly ordered spy surveillance of political opponents in 1985 on suspicions that Communists infiltrated an anti-free trade group, newly-released records show. The [Council of Canadians](#), founded by publisher Mel Hurtig, was placed under subversion watch.

"This is one of the most preposterous things I've ever heard," said Hurtig, 82, now a Vancouver author. "We were fighting against free trade, and we put up a hell of a fight, too; I guess this was the response. It's unbelievable."

Accounts of surveillance by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service are documented in weekly minutes of senior management. The records were released through *Access To Information* by Library & Archives Canada.

Files show in the period from 1985 to 1986 the Solicitor General personally instructed officials to quietly investigate Hurtig's group, founded in 1985, though it included MPs and other public officials. "In all my years in public life I've never encountered a single Communist," Hurtig said. "Our members included many prominent Canadians." Council members included author Pierre Berton; United Auto Workers president Bob White; Liberal MP Herb Gray; New Democrat MP Lorne Nystrom; and Ottawa Mayor Marion Dewar.

"The Communist Party of Canada infiltrates the Council of Canadians," say minutes of a January 22, 1986 session of the *Counter Subversion Management Meeting*. The heavily-censored records marked SECRET conceal who attended the conference, but indicate security chiefs met weekly to monitor subversive activities.

At a December 18, 1986 session, minutes confirm the surveillance had continued the entire year: "The Communist Party of Canada continues its infiltration of the Council of Canadians. This hilite was drafted in response to a request from the Minister. This item will be held until the question of infiltration is more clear."

Hurtig recalled a 1987 incident, confirmed in Parliament at the time, when he caught a U.S. State Department agent in his room at Ottawa's Chateau Laurier hotel after returning from a Council of Canadians meeting. "You know the mindset of these security organizations," he said. "There is always this creepy element, where you get these paranoid agencies that don't have enough to do and begin acting on the basis of political ideology without any evidence of wrongdoing."

"I count it an honour to be on the enemies list," Hurtig added.

### **"A Shocking Revelation"**

Then-Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, now a partner with Norton Rose Fulbright LLP of Montréal, declined comment. Minutes suggest Mulroney knew of the *Counter Subversion* group activities, but was indifferent to their work. "The Minister felt that the Prime Minister is not concerned with the problems of foreign interference," read the minutes of an October 31, 1985 meeting; "The counter subversion program must continue and (the Minister) fully trusts CSIS's competence."

The name of the solicitor general who ordered surveillance on the Council of Canadians is not known. Three cabinet ministers held the portfolio in the 1985-6 period: James Kelleher, a Sault Ste. Marie, Ont. MP who died in 2013; and two others, Perrin Beatty and Elmer MacKay.

Beatty, now the president and CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, did not respond to *Blacklock's* request for an interview. MacKay could not be reached at his Hopewell, N.S. home.

"It really is a shocking revelation," said Maude Barlow, national chair of the Council of Canadians. "It tells us the Mulroney government was convinced any critic of their policies was an enemy and had to be discredited."

"Not much has changed," Barlow added; "It is all a sad commentary on the state of our democracy."

## Only 400 Communists

Confidential files indicate several unions and the CBC were also suspected of subversion and Communist infiltration, though officials knew the Communist Party was a small group with few members. The 1982 *Annual Report* of the RCMP Security Service counted only 400 members of the Communist Party nationwide, with an additional 640 Marxist-Leninists, mainly in Québec. However spy chiefs saw widespread subversive activities, reporting:

- “A CBC van with antennas was seen parked at the Toronto Region office, probably trying to pick up emission from our screens. If you notice them at our building tell Internal Security. Technical services advises us they cannot do it”;
- “Communist Party of Canada, Marxist-Leninist plan to disrupt Halifax naval celebrations”;
- “Communist Party of Canada manipulation and infiltration of the peace movement”.

In its weekly conferences the *Counter Subversion Management Meeting* also claimed Red infiltration of unions groups including the Canadian Labour Congress; the Ontario Federation of Labour; the British Columbia Federation of Labour; the Canadian Union of Public Employees; and the B.C. Carpenters Union “successfully infiltrated by the Communist Party,” claimed one report.

CSIS was also convinced Communists were involved in a strike at an Edmonton meatpacking plant, Gainers Inc. In 1986 the United Food & Commercial Workers union picketed the slaughterhouse owned by Peter Pocklington, a former Conservative leadership candidate.

CSIS called it the work of subversives: “Communist Party of Canada Alberta involvement in Gainers Strike”, reads one reference: “This hilite should be strengthened to inform the government that members of the Communist Party of Canada are involved in the Gainers Strike”.

“It’s all hard to believe,” said Hurtig, an Order of Canada recipient who lived in Edmonton at the time; “I’m thinking of going out to get myself a bulletproof vest.”

By Tom Korsi 