

Oral Questions

We should not jump to conclusions about the way the Security Intelligence Review Committee is going to do its work. It has promised to have a report by the month of October. We should pass judgment on its work only after we have seen it and had a chance to assess it.

I for one want to deal fully with the findings of the report so that if there is anything demonstrated by way of problems we can take corrective action even though the matters in question arose before we took office.

[Translation]

The Speaker: Supplementary question. I would ask the hon. member to formulate his question so that it concerns the department and its activities instead of the committees.

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm): Mr. Speaker, the minister is obviously on the same wavelength as Jacques Courtois as he does not answer yes or no, even in this House. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister. By answering this way, does the minister not lend a little support to CSIS's way of operating and prevent the Sub-Committee on National Security from doing its job in this matter?

• (1455)

The Speaker: If the minister wants to answer the question, he can do so but he does not have to.

[English]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I want to assist the hon. member by giving him a categorical and clear answer. Yes, I will carry out the responsibility imposed on me by the CSIS act as passed by Parliament. I have no authority however to direct the chairman of the Security Intelligence Review Committee about the way he and his committee do their work. I am sure they are very conscious of the responsibility they have undertaken in accepting appointments to the committee. I am sure they are capable of following the proceedings of the House.

In light of that I look forward to their report so that we can deal with whatever they conclude in a way that serves the best interest of the country.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Herb Grubel (Capilano—Howe Sound): Mr. Speaker, in his last budget the Minister of Finance announced that Canada's debt would increase by 20 per cent or \$97 billion over the next three years. He has planned to do that. Such an increase is the highest in the history of Canada for any three-year period.

Now the news is that even this target will not be met and that the debt at the end of three years will be \$10 billion to \$16 billion above the \$97 billion already planned.

What will the Minister of Finance and his government do about this frightening problem of a runaway deficit?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, before answering I should like to congratulate my colleague on having been named one of the two co-critics. If it takes two I am a critic on ten. In all sincerity I should like to congratulate him on his appointment.

Certainly I congratulate him on the fact that he has moved to the front benches. I must say I find it amazing, knowing this particular member, that he has moved a little closer to the centre of the political spectrum.

The answer to the question is that the assumption upon which it is based is simply not well founded. The accumulation of past deficits and the fact of compound interest, as the member knows full well, have led to the tremendous increase in debt. Indeed had the party opposite, heaven forbid, been in office we would have had this compound interest effecting this tremendous increase in the debt. I hope the member understands that.

In any event the member asked what the government was going to do. Let me simply cite the Prime Minister yesterday. We are going to hit our targets.

Mr. Herb Grubel (Capilano—Howe Sound): Mr. Speaker, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Finance recently announced that the ministry was planning the taxation of RRSPs in order to hit those targets.

I would like to ask the Minister of Finance whether this is true or whether the people of Canada who are already overtaxed can expect him to cut spending instead?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, no spokesman for the Department of Finance made that statement.

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[Translation]

HAITI

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. We learned with relief yesterday that an agreement had been reached between Washington and the military junta in Haiti that allowed the peaceful landing of a multinational force to restore democracy in the country and thus enable the democratically elected president, Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide, to return.

• (1500)

Here is my question: Was the minister informed of the terms of the agreement between Washington and the military junta and, if so, can he tell this House what they are and when President Aristide is to return to Haiti?