

*Routine Proceedings*

that it operates legally? In other words, why is it there? On whom is it spying? Is it spying on Canadians indirectly through NSA to avoid Canadian law? And is the NSA spying on Americans through CSE to avoid American law? We do not know this. And yet we are a democracy. Again, it is part of a government that is too closed and too secretive.

The gulf war proved to us that law-abiding citizens in this country can still be intimidated by the force of government. A knock on the door late in the evening by CSIS officers, two hours of questioning, no rights explained, no one to turn to for help.

Allegations have been made that the Israeli intelligence service used the confusion and hysteria over the war to interrogate Canadians while posing as CSIS officers. The government has failed to reassure Canadians that this did not happen, nor that it can prevent it from happening again.

I include this allegation because that is precisely what Mossad did in Norway. In Norway the head of its security and intelligence system was fired as a result of it.

The Supreme Court of Canada recently demonstrated how senior bureaucrats and secret agencies still have total control over the security assessment of ordinary Canadians. CSIS looked into some 65,000 such requests last year alone.

According to the law, the Security Intelligence Review Committee, the public watch-dog and the only public watch-dog we have of CSIS, has no powers to overturn negative security clearance decisions for federal employees. How many honest Canadians did CSIS turn down? How many then realized there was no appeal process to turn to? What about their future job prospects?

The SIRC has done a good job on balance over its history, but it is pretty toothless. It is far too restricted by statute. Parliament recommended two years ago that this be changed. The government replied that there was no need to be alarmed, and nothing has been done about it.

I can recall the meetings we have had with SIRC members, putting questions to them. They make every effort they can to inform the committee, at least that is my impression. Yet we know that they are circumscribed, they are restricted, they are prevented from giving us the information we want as a subcommittee of this House and an elected body. The time has come, Mr. Speaker, and I say this through you to the minister, to put an end

to this, to take the Sub-Committee on National Security into the government's confidence. I can assure you that we will act in a responsible way.

• (1040)

The CSIS Act still needs to be amended. SIRC must be given more weight and influence in the appeals cases. It must be able to investigate the operations not only of CSIS, but of all government intelligence branches, from external affairs to defence, immigration and also CSE.

The Sub-Committee on National Security must be briefed on all arrangements made between CSIS, the RCMP, CSE and all countries with which we deal in the intelligence world. I am not asking for all of the minute details, but in general, what are those agreements and why? What are the purposes?

Above all, the public must know that someone somewhere is working to protect them from the secret intelligence machinery of government, any government, in this country.

Two years ago, we made 117 recommendations to change our policies and laws in the field of national security. So far, the government has implemented about one and one-half, perhaps two at the most.

The system is far from perfect. The government's attitude towards the whole issue needs to change now. It is its responsibility to listen to criticism, to implement recommendations and to account for its decisions. Otherwise, there will be no rights and privileges for CSIS to protect.

In conclusion, I am not satisfied with pious platitudes. This document could have been released a week ago and nobody would have ever dreamed of leaking it. There was nothing in there to leak. It is a profound disappointment, as I said at the outset.

I know the minister is acting on instructions from his senior bureaucrats in the security and intelligence field and that is a two-edged sword. I know that ministers have to take the best advice they can get, but I would hope that ministers would also exercise their independent judgment as well.

I also hope that this government will break out of this secrecy and inform the parliamentary Sub-Committee on National Security of a great many more facts relating to the activities of CSIS. In that way, we would then truly have the best arrangement in the free and democratic world.