

*Private Members' Business*

• (1840)

However, like Ceasar's wife the SIRC must be above suspicion but, unfortunately, this not the case at the present time. This review committee is made up of five members. Three were appointed on the recommendation of the party which governed during the 34th Parliament, the Conservative Party. These three appointees are Mr. Jacques Courtois, Mr. Edwin Goodman and Mr. George Vari.

There are, therefore, more Conservative members in this committee than in this House. We can see, already, that the Official Opposition is not represented on the committee, and this is not acceptable.

Another member is Mrs. Rosemary Brown, Chair of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. She is working full time for that organization and we did not have a chance to meet her when the SIRC appeared before the Sub-committee on National Security. Mrs. Brown was appointed on the recommendation of the New Democratic Party which was then the third party in the House, but has now lost its party status.

Finally, the last member is Mr. Michel Robert, whose qualifications we will not contest. Our only questions are: Could Mr. Robert be slightly over-worked, since on top of being a member of the SIRC he is also working, at the government's request, on a settlement in Oka? On the one hand he must work with ministers of the Crown, and on the other he must investigate the activities of the Canadian Intelligence Security Service. Maybe he should drop one job and concentrate on the one he is best suited for.

But in order to have a watchdog, a review committee, a renewed SIRC instead of the "circus" we have at present, it is imperative that the current members of the committee resign so that new appointments can be made that better reflect the 35th Parliament. This way, three appointments could be made by the government on the recommendation of a minister of the Crown, in all likelihood a Liberal, one on the recommendation of the Official Opposition and one more on that of the third party, that is to say the Reform Party of Canada. This would be an example of democracy in action, since the SIRC, like the Senate, remained unchanged after the election.

So, I do support the motion before us, but at the condition that new members be appointed to the SIRC, especially since the current members systematically refused, when testifying before the national security committee on September 13, to answer questions put to them by the committee on behalf of the House of Commons which is supreme in that respect.

How could we trust any longer individuals who refuse to co-operate with the elected representatives of the people and hide behind an overly finicky interpretation of Section 54 of the

National Security Act to say that they account to the minister and nobody else? I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but as long as the members of the SIRC will claim to be accountable only to the minister, there will be a serious credibility problem with the very institution of Parliament as well as with the House of Commons, as a component of the Parliament of Canada. The SIRC members must be replaced with individuals who understand that, until the contrary be proved, in this country, the lawful, fundamental and primary authority rests with the representatives elected by the people to sit in this House.

• (1845)

I will conclude with the following amendment proposal: I move, seconded by my colleague from Berthier—Montcalm:

That the motion be amended by adding after the words "Establishment (CSE)" the following: "and to table an annual report in the House on the aforementioned activities".

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the amendment in order.

[English]

**Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to speak to the motion put forth by the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

The question today is not whether this House should support this motion but rather why has it taken so long to be considered. More than 10 years ago Parliament passed legislation ensuring that the activities of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service were reviewed by an independent body.

Nobody on the government side of this House would suggest that CSIS should not have an oversight body. Yet a few weeks ago ministers tried to convince this House and all Canadians that the Communications Security Establishment did not require a review body. In response to a number of questions put to her by the official opposition, the Deputy Prime Minister used the following response over and over again: "The CSE has no mandate to spy on Canadians".

This response is interesting for a couple of reasons. First, the Deputy Prime Minister was not asked about the mandate of the CSE. She was asked if it ever spied on Canadians. She refused to answer that question, opting instead to refer to the mandate of the CSE. Let us look at the mandate of the CSE. Actually, I would love to look at the mandate of the CSE but I cannot. It does not appear to have one, certainly not by statute.

In September 1990 the special committee on the review of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act and the Security Offences Act tabled its report entitled "In Flux, But Not in Crisis". On page 153 of this report there is the following passage on the CSE: