

*Supply*

hearing into this matter by claiming that SIRC has a mandate to do the same work. This is not true. SIRC advised the subcommittee looking into this matter that it could not investigate matters once they reached the Solicitor General's office. This means that SIRC has no power whatsoever to determine whether the former Solicitor General politicized CSIS. This is a central question beyond the mandate of SIRC. Was CSIS used for political purposes under the direction of Doug Lewis?

Therefore, there is a need to look not just at this matter but to look at the whole question of the politicizing of our federal institutions by the Mulroney government, including CSIS and the RCMP.

There is the clear suggestion that there has been a deliberate dismantling of the division of power between those who create the law and those who administer and enforce the law. This is the much broader and more serious question raised by this whole McInnis-Bristow issue and that is has the rule of law been destroyed or harmed in this country?

Therefore I reject the submission made in this House today by the present Solicitor General that SIRC can do the job. It is obvious SIRC cannot look into misuse and abuse of political powers within the office of the former Solicitor General or any other institution of government. Therefore its mandate is inadequate.

Our hopes must rest with the subcommittee. If the subcommittee fails to get to the bottom of the issue and answer all relevant questions, the demand for a full scale inquiry will be justified at that point.

**Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River):** Madam Speaker, I must admit that it was with some surprise that I took note last night of the opposition motion that a royal commission be invoked to deal with a number of allegations that have been put in the media of late, over the last month or two, in relation to both the mandate of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and the security of documentation that emanates from CSIS and as it might make its way to the minister who reports to this House for CSIS which is the Solicitor General.

These events out of which the allegations arose took place two, three, four years ago. In any event, the opposition has made its motion. Before dealing with the substance of the motion I would take note, as others perhaps have done before me, that the use of the word illegal in the motion might be construed as unparliamentary. That word has been found to be unparliamentary in the past. I recognize the courtesy of the opposition in changing the wording of the motion earlier today to allegations of illegal activities.

I would have preferred to see the words allegations of improper activities because no one has been very particular about what illegality there might have been.

• (1350)

Any illegality there might have been would surely have been related to the mandate of CSIS. To draw an analogy, if someone in the department of agriculture decides they are going to do something involving the Department of Health that is surely not a matter of illegality per se.

In any event, I will abandon the technical issues and attempt to speak to the motion.

Other colleagues in the House have noted appropriately the work of CSIS on behalf of Canadians. CSIS has for 10 years been carrying on this type of work which involves gathering and analysis of intelligence and preparation of security clearances, providing security reports and analysis to other departments of government.

The member who just spoke referred to a security clearance by the RCMP. The RCMP does not do security clearances. This is the job carried out for Canadians by CSIS.

The work of CSIS focuses primarily around what are called threats to the security of Canada and these defined threats are outlined in section 2 of the CSIS act and they include espionage and foreign influenced activities. Sometimes CSIS activity is described under the category of counter intelligence. Some of that work includes the so-called spying which occurs in Canada on the part of some operations of other governments.

There is the area of counter terrorism. Terrorism may or may not involve a foreign government and there is also a category of threat to Canada which we call subversion but in relation to which the service does not carry on any investigative activity without the expressed consent of the Solicitor General. The last time we checked here on the parliamentary side we did not find any ongoing CSIS operations in relation to subversion.

Most of what CSIS does, most of the good work it does, never gets reported. Because of the nature of the work it does not prepare press releases every Friday afternoon for consumption by the media or for that matter consumption by anyone. Most of its good work is done quietly at desks using paper and computers and good common sense. That work carries on both in making security assessments and in the gathering of data mostly from open source. Most of the data it gathers come from open sources and it also has data that come from other non-open sources which it gathers using appropriate and legal methods.

It assists both the Government of Canada and generally the citizenry by keeping an eye on foreign government theft of industrial secrets and it also keeps an eye on what we would call foreign meddling, meddling in Canada by governments outside Canada using whatever means it wishes. That is probably a bit of a cat and mouse game that goes on in all countries of the world.

Why does the official opposition request a royal commission? We have in this country a statute that governs CSIS, a statute