

Supply

● (1245)

It would have been very simple to let members be informed openly, but since they are denied access to the truth, only one solution remains: the people must now be informed through a royal commission of inquiry on CSIS.

Mr. Patrick Gagnon (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General): Madam Speaker, the Security Intelligence Review Committee was set up ten years ago precisely to ensure greater transparency regarding the activities of CSIS. Let us not forget, and I hope the hon. member will agree, that we have a duty to protect industrial interests in Canada.

All kinds of rumours are circulating in the Greater Montreal to the effect that some Quebec industries are the target of foreign interests or industrial espionage. I think the media reported several cases of Canadian companies losing contracts or being robbed of some technology by a foreign government. In my opinion, the primary objective is to protect the technological advances of our industries, including the aerospace and pharmaceutical industries, which are very important in Quebec and also elsewhere in Canada.

Does the hon. member recognize that we must protect our interests against increasing and disturbing competition from certain countries?

Mr. de Savoye: Madam Speaker, the hon. member is full of good intentions. I notice that he is the only one on the Liberal side to defend that cause. In fact, some other Liberal members were making very different statements not that long ago.

On March 19, 1992, when he was in opposition, the Liberal member for Scarborough West, said this regarding this issue: "We call upon CSIS and the minister to ensure, now that they can crawl, that future annual statements and reports contain more information, as promised by the minister himself, so that Canadians can have an informed public debate, be aware of the national security issues which face our nation, consider the major national security issues which face our country from year to year and how we are to handle them". The hon. member for Scarborough West was right on then, but the fact is that two years later Canadians, and even MPs in this House, still do not have the information requested.

Where are the Liberal members who were then asking for what we are asking for today? They keep silent. There is only one spokesperson for the Liberals and he has not been here long enough to realize that the problem has already persisted for too long and should have been resolved by now.

Mr. Gagnon: Madam Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member that, as the member for Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, I will always be first in line to protect individual

freedoms. I will never accept the fact that legitimate organizations and political parties are being spied upon. I think that my party, and the government I have the privilege to be part of, have always sought first and foremost to protect individual liberties.

The hon. member referred to our committee. There is a sub-committee, made up of Liberals, Reform members and representatives of the Bloc Québécois, which has been set up to undertake a review parallel to that of SIRC on allegations made against our security intelligence services. I believe we have shown some openness. I am very proud to see that even members on this side of the House are asking relevant questions that need to be answered. SIRC was created precisely to investigate allegations that can, at times, be legitimately made by the opposition or members on this side of the House.

● (1250)

Let me reassure the hon. member by saying that we follow our proud tradition and always try to protect the underprivileged in Canada, who are unfortunately going through some tough times. I am proud to be part of this government and of a party which is concerned about the less-privileged in Canada.

Mr. de Savoye: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to hear my colleague opposite say that they want to shed some light on actions by CSIS.

Let me remind the House that, on April 1, 1993, the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River pointed out that Parliament's five-year review involved 117 recommendations and said: "While it certainly was not our belief that the government would immediately adopt all 117 recommendations, all of us who participated in the committee were disappointed that at the end of the day only one or two recommendations were actually formally adopted".

Mr. Asselin: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. When the hon. member for Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine referred to this side of the House when speaking about the government, I noticed that only a few members were interested. I call for a quorum count.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I will ask the Clerk to count the members present.

And the count having been taken:

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I see a quorum. Resuming debate.

[English]

Mr. Duncan: Madam Speaker, is not a Reform member the next speaker?