

*Routine Proceedings*

Quebecers want to have more than this very broad information. We want to know to what use the money we give this government and this agency in particular is put.

If the real purpose of this statement and the public report was to provide Canadians with an assessment of the present intelligence and security environment and especially to inform them about what is being done to protect the security of the country, I think that they have missed the boat again; we learn absolutely nothing. A lot of information is scattered left and right as a diversion but there is nothing substantial to show the real value obtained from the \$228.7 million spent by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service last year. That is not peanuts—it is a quarter of a billion dollars.

I am sure that the Solicitor General of Canada will answer me that for reasons of national security, the government cannot reveal more.

● (1530)

But would it affect national security to know in which province CSIS spent the most or which province benefited the most from the \$228.7 million spent last year?

Would it affect national security to know about inactive files—I hope that CSIS has closed a few files in its ten years of existence—so that we have tangible evidence of what this service has accomplished, in what areas it has conducted investigations? Would it affect national security to know that Quebecers and Canadians have in their hands something tangible to check whether or not they do a good job?

Would it affect national security to know which investigations saved lives or prevented attacks or disasters? Unfortunately, what we now see in the newspapers is only the negative side. I am quite willing to offer constructive criticism but I am not provided with the arguments, the files or anything else I need to do so. We now hear about things like Air India that are not too flattering to CSIS, or about terrorists entering Canada. But if we had something more constructive, more positive in the reports, we could present different arguments.

In ten years of existence, as I was saying earlier, and three public reports, I feel that something more concrete could be said to increase transparency without threatening national security. I think that if the government wants to be more transparent, it should apply this philosophy in these reports.

True, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service itself is watched by the Security Intelligence Review Committee or SIRC, as the Solicitor General said earlier. It is reassuring to know that, Mr. Speaker. I feel comforted by the fact that the Solicitor General of Canada is reassured by SIRC's last report saying that CSIS operations were legal and effective.

But who are the wise people who wrote this report and came to this conclusion? I am going to name them because I think that some members of this hon. House do not know them.

They are Jacques Courtois, a 73-year-old lawyer; Rosemary Brown, a 63-year-old social worker and the first Black woman to be elected in British Columbia; Edwin Goodman, a 75-year-old lawyer; George Vari, 70; and Michel Robert, whose age I do not know, a former national president of the Liberal Party of Canada.

When we see who is overseeing this committee, we may wonder. I am not saying this is not a good group whose members are not qualified, but what right have these people to monitor an organization that we in this House cannot monitor? I think that we must be even more suspicious of and look more closely at an organization such as CSIS. And I think that the recently elected 35th Parliament has the mandate and the capacity to determine if this \$228.7 million is well spent. On the contrary, this job has been given to a committee where the average age is about 70. These people are probably friends of the government but are they qualified to present such a report and say that yes, everything is consistent with the law? I have my doubts and that is why I cannot present a very positive report, because we were given a statement almost impossible to verify, general principles, wishful thinking, but nothing more tangible. When we see who monitors CSIS, we realize there may be a problem there also.

● (1535)

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the friends of the government who sit on the external review committee may have a definition which is different from that of the legitimate elected members of the 35th Parliament on what the protection of Canadians and Quebecers' lives, as well as of the country's interests, entails.

As for the legitimate Official Opposition, I can tell you that we surely have a definition which is different from that of the Security Intelligence Review Committee. Since the Solicitor General of Canada quoted an excerpt of the report in his statement, I will also refer to a part of this report which raises questions in my mind on just what the protection of life means.

In its report, the committee notes that in a small number of recent cases—identified by the five people I referred to earlier, whose average age is 70—the intelligence gathered by the Service during these investigations on certain individuals seemed unrelated to the issue of national security. The committee is also of the opinion that even though some investigations were related to law enforcement issues regarding legal protest activities or the expression of dissent, no intelligence information leads it to conclude that activities described in paragraph (c) of the definition of threats to the security of Canada, in section 2 of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act had occurred.