

Private Members' Business

of fulfilling the same function for CSE with only a marginal increase in expenditure.

We believe, and I am firmly supportive of this, that if Parliament adopted this motion, if the government implemented it, it would be a cost effective adoption of the concept of review and oversight already adopted by Parliament and working reasonably satisfactorily.

I want to read something from the McDonald commission, which is starting to look awfully long in the tooth but is still quoted extensively in these areas. The August 1981 second report of the McDonald commission indicates there is a serious moral issue involved in the way government deals with security intelligence matters.

I see my time is running short so I will not read all of it but I certainly want to incorporate that reference in my remarks here today.

I am not saying that the CSE is out there breaking laws now. It tells us it is not. However, it does have the means to invade the communications privacy of Canadians in ways beyond the comprehension of most of us.

Why wait for a scandal, why wait for an embarrassment, why wait for someone to make a mistake inadvertently, or advertently within CSE? Let us develop now a mechanism which will cause CSE to know that it is accountable to Canadians through Parliament and through the Security Intelligence Review Committee. Then the universe can unfold. Everyone will know what the rules are. Everyone within CSE will know who the players are and what the program is.

I want to point out that SIRC reports that CSIS is already routinely making use of CSE shared data and denoting that in the CSIS data base. Therefore SIRC clearly has an interest in this.

• (1835)

I quote a former chairman of the Security Intelligence Review Committee, Mr. Ron Atkey. "We are not looking for a new, additional assignment. We have plenty to do. However, we cannot fail sometimes to observe the absence of review mechanisms in other parts of the intelligence system". He was speaking specifically about CSE.

As I wrap this up, I realize that Parliament will have an opportunity to continue to debate this issue for a period beyond today and that the matter should come to a vote in due course.

I ask all members to consider carefully my remarks and the remarks of other colleagues, and to make a reasoned decision about this when we are called on to adopt this motion.

[Translation]

Mr. François Langlois (Bellechasse, BQ): Mr. Speaker, allow me to first congratulate the member for Scarborough—Rouge River, who also happens to be chairman of the Sub-committee on National Security, on presenting motion M-38 to the House.

Who could be in a better position to present such a motion than the chairman of the Sub-committee on National Security! I believe that this is tangible proof that we need better control. I support the motion presented by the member for Scarborough—Rouge River, subject to some reservations I will explain and a few changes I will suggest.

When talking about an agency such as CSE, the Communications Security Establishment, it is good to give a brief historical background. My colleague for Scarborough—Rouge River went back to 1941, but I would like to review, if I may, the legal instruments which, during the post-war era, produced this institution as we know it today.

CSE first started as a unit of the National Research Council, under Order in Council 54-3535 dated April 13, 1946. CSE was the successor to the civilian and military intelligence services which, during the war, had worked in co-operation with similar British and American services.

On April 1, 1975, responsibility for this communications unit of the National Research Council passed to the Department of National Defence. CSE's mandate was never officially defined by a statutory instrument, but it is generally understood that its mandate should be limited, by the Privy Council, to Canada's external security.

While we are entitled to expect that CSE's activities are targeting communications from or to foreign countries, or relating to foreign embassies, or any communications involving at least one foreigner, recent and serious allegations lead us to believe that CSE may have intercepted, without any legal mandate, with or even without ministerial authority, conversations and communications between Canadians, in Canada, and that it may even have eavesdropped on leaders of the Quebec sovereignist movement who are operating legally and legitimately.

Since CSE is accountable only to the Privy Council, its executives and its agents may have become somewhat too lax. Therefore, it seems imperative for the Security Intelligence Review Committee, commonly known as SIRC, to review the operations of CSE, while, of course, maintaining the authority of Parliament and of the Sub-committee on National Security over CSE's activities.