

Supply

• (1050)

[English]

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this issue. I am a bit surprised by the fascination of members of the Bloc with this case. They appear to be very disappointed that they were not the organization or the political party with which CSIS was involved. It seems to be a clear case of CSIS envy.

The attitude of the Bloc must be questioned. The original motion shows an inclination to condemn the government for the refusal to initiate a royal commission on the illegal activities of CSIS rather than the allegation. I think the Bloc gets ahead of itself in this particular matter.

I have often listened to the Bloc accuse the Reform Party of using wild west justice and of being awfully tough on crime, but at least we believe people are innocent until they are proven guilty. The Bloc seems already to be assuming the guilt of CSIS before in fact it has been proven as such.

There are a number of allegations out there and I have made more than a few of them myself, but I am not aware at this time of any evidence that CSIS was involved in illegal activities.

There is a significant amount of evidence however that someone was involved in wrongdoing. But was it CSIS that was responsible for this wrongdoing, or was it Grant Bristow who was responsible, or was it the previous government?

How can the Bloc accuse CSIS of committing illegal activities when the investigations are presently being conducted? I am not the biggest fan of the Security Intelligence Review Committee and that is quite obvious. I am prepared to give them the benefit of the doubt until the report is tabled.

SIRC is actively investigating the role of CSIS in this issue. I know because I sat in on a SIRC interview. I know it is looking into it. I know it has spoken to a number of officials within the Reform Party. I know it has spoken to a number of people who have pertinent information about this case.

There is no reason to doubt the efficiency of the SIRC investigation. However, once the investigation is over we will get the report. At that time the pressure will be on committee members as to whether or not their report is accurate and whether their report is enough. Their integrity will be at stake at that time.

If there is evidence of wrongdoing by the previous government, will the Conservative members of SIRC enthusiastically pursue this information in their report? As the saying goes, only time will tell. I am encourage, however, that SIRC members have said they want the report to be as public as possible.

I am still concerned about what definition SIRC uses for national security and the reasons for national security. I will explain why I am concerned. On May 10, SIRC appeared before the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs. When discussing the role of CSIS in technology transfer it mentioned it was limited to eight key sectors. When asked to identify those eight key sectors, the response was: "We are not at liberty to identify those eight key sectors".

Exactly one week earlier the director of CSIS, Mr. Ray Protti, had appeared before the same justice committee. He too chose to talk about technology transfer. He stated that the investigation was: "in those high technology areas like aerospace, nuclear, biochemical and telecommunications".

Here is an example of where the director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service was being more open than its review body. This certainly does not bode well for a truly open and public report. However we must give SIRC the opportunity to come up with the report. Its report will then go to the Solicitor General who I understand will determine what will be released.

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The Solicitor General has assured the House that it is his objective: "to make as much as possible the report public". He went on to state that he would seek legal advice to help him make up his mind on how much he could make public.

I would like to give him a little advice now. Everything should be released except the information about CSIS sources other than Grant Bristow. There is no reason why the entire issue cannot be discussed openly.

While no one has ever accused members of the Heritage Front of being Rhodes Scholars, it is safe to assume even they have figured out that CSIS was investigating them. Likewise I think it is a safe bet to assume they now think Grant Bristow was a source. There really is nothing left to hid. Why would we even try?

If the SIRC report that the Solicitor General releases to the public is not complete then the credibility of CSIS, of SIRC, of the minister and of the government will all suffer. Yes, CSIS needs a certain amount of secrecy to operate efficiently, but it cannot operate without the confidence of the Canadian people.

The release of the report is all about confidence. If it is thorough and completely public, confidence in CSIS will be there even if CSIS is guilty of some minor indiscretions. However, if the report is heavily censored in the interest of national security there will be little public confidence even if CSIS is vindicated. Any evidence of any significant censoring of SIRC's report will automatically be viewed as a cover-up. If this is the case, not only will the Reform Party be joining the Bloc in a call for a royal commission; we will be leading the demand.