

Routine Proceedings

The minister refers to counter-espionage. He asked many questions concerning the intelligence service remnants of the fallen Soviet Union. But there are no answers.

He says without explanation that governments have continued to mount offensive intelligence collection efforts against us. But there is no further information. How does any of this contribute to informed public debate, which the minister told us his statements were going to do?

In referring to counter-terrorism he told us that there is a national counter-terrorism plan in place. Indeed that is reassuring. However, there is no mention whatsoever in his statement that the special emergency response team SERT, which is a branch of the RCMP and was specifically set up to deal with terrorist attacks, is being disbanded to be replaced by a group within the armed forces, no discussion that that has either occurred or is occurring smoothly and the armed forces are ready, willing and able to take over this responsibility. Is this contributing to informed public debate?

He refers to security screening. He says it is the job of CSIS to screen potential immigrants for violence and people who would ignore Canada's peaceful and democratic political traditions. There are no details of how this is being done. I might add there is no discussion how Mr. Al-Mashat, an ambassador of an enemy state, got past this screening.

Referring to the CSIS act itself, he reminds us that CSIS was created to provide government with information on threats to Canadian security. Has CSIS fulfilled its mandate? The minister does not say. Is this contributing to informed public debate?

He refers to human rights and the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals. Thankfully the minister reassures Canadians that these are being respected by CSIS.

We have to look at the following question. Does the minister's statement today fulfil his own promise as I read it a few moments ago? In my view and in the view of the Liberal Party, the answer must be a profound triple no.

First of all, does it contribute to informed public debate because there is little or no information provided, only many generalities and platitudes. Does it discuss the

major national security issues dealt with in the previous year as promised by the minister in writing? Absolutely not.

There is no mention even in the broadest terms of actions taken to protect Canadians prior to, during, and after the Persian Gulf War. There is no mention, even though security clearance of immigrants is a part of the mandate, of the Al-Mashat affair and the CSIS role or lack of role in it. There is no mention of the allegations that certain foreign intelligence services are operating clandestinely in Canada and what, if anything, CSIS did or is doing about it. The CSIS report itself contains no specific discussion of the "threat environment" in Canada as the minister promised that it would.

• (1030)

In conclusion, the Liberal Party recognizes that this is the first report of its kind in Canadian history and I have already applauded the mechanism by which this became the fact.

We also acknowledge the truism that a baby must crawl before it can walk. We call upon CSIS and the minister to ensure now that they can crawl, 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.

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, I stand with mixed feelings this morning because the minister has just presented a statement to the House based on a report by a special committee of this House that had 117 recommendations, and as my friend has just said, this is the only recommendation in its entirety that has been really accepted.

Having listened to what the minister had to say this morning, I doubt very much whether our time was well spent, to say nothing of the minister's time, because there is virtually nothing in this statement that will enlighten or inform either Parliament or the Canadian public.

First of all, I want to refer to the preface of a document published about a year ago, February 1991 entitled *On Course, National Security for the 1990s* and signed by his predecessor the Hon. Pierre H. Cadieux.