

Mr. Bryden: Mr. Speaker, I certainly think that the examination of this issue should go wherever the parliamentary committee deems it ought to go and call whatever witnesses the committee thinks appropriate.

I do point out that there is an enormous assumption of dishonesty here. Is my colleague opposite suggesting that the previous government was so corrupt, and it would be corruption, that it actually could politicize CSIS and do what he said? Otherwise, unless that assumption is made there is no reason, no motive to believe that this Mr. Bristow did infiltrate the Reform Party.

I submit that the apparent lack of motive makes it enormously probable that this did not happen.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nic Leblanc (Longueuil): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal member who just spoke mentioned the role of CSIS in connection with our economy and the protection of our patents here in Canada. I know that several years ago, there were frequent complaints that Canada was a sitting duck for this kind of espionage. I think that was one of the roles CSIS had to play.

Since the hon. member appears to be very familiar with the agency, with CSIS, I want to ask him, since we want an inquiry, whether this could also be part of the inquiry, in other words, why Canada is a sitting duck for industrial espionage. We are told it is terribly easy. People come from all over the world and apparently have no trouble taking or stealing—I think that is the word—something on which we have spent a lot of time and effort.

Since we do a lot of research in this country, why is it so easy to come and steal the results of our research? Perhaps this should be included in the inquiry the Bloc Québécois is calling for, so we could find out what the problems are and why it is so easy to get away with that.

• (1715)

[*English*]

Mr. Bryden: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I think it was a very good one indeed.

The reason Canada has been perceived in this way—and I think it is a very serious problem—is that perhaps not enough money has been invested in CSIS in the past. Perhaps CSIS has not had the support it deserves. I am aware that there was a major investment in CSIS just recently. A new CSIS building has just gone up south of the city here. I think progress is being made.

I do not think a royal commission, if I may say to my colleague, is the way to go in getting to the root of his particular concern which I share. I think this should be the subject matter of the appropriate parliamentary committee.

Supply

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose): Mr. Speaker, in my speech I used the word if quite often, as did the hon. member across the way. We have a couple of speeches with a lot of ifs. I think his if was a little bigger than my if. He was talking about it being a shame if Mr. Bristow happened to be on the right track of something and this whole thing interfered with it.

I know what I believe. I do not think there is any doubt about it. One thing that has been lost in the country is the trust of the people who sent us here. That trust has been lost in the public. All we have to do is open our ears and listen to the fears of people about corruption, suspected corruption or supposed corruption, for the last 30 years.

So far no one has accused me of it, but I have seen surveys asking people what is the most popular occupation or who are the most valuable persons in the country. When we see doctors and teachers on the list and find politicians underneath lawyers I think we in the House have something to think about.

I like the assurances of the parliamentary secretary, but I am afraid assurances like those ones have become nothing more than political rhetoric for Canadians. They have heard it before. They probably heard it before that hon. member was born. It has been going on and on.

What does the member suggest as a basis of the ongoing studies on what actions SIRC should take when it has obviously identified some serious problems? What actions does he think the committee will take if it verifies even some of the allegations?

Mr. Bryden: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member commented on the public's lack of trust. I submit to him that we do not help the public's confidence or trust when we engage in major, shall we say, witch-hunts based on unsubstantiated allegations as in this case and as occurred many times in case of the previous Parliament. When the House is drawn into debate and people make allegations across the floor without proper evidence we erode the public's trust.

On his other comments, I cannot forecast what a review committee or the people reviewing the matter ought to do until they see the evidence. They will make their own decisions.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to also rise in support of this motion put forward by my colleague, the hon. member for Bellechasse, whose riding happens to be next to mine. I think it would be worthwhile to remind the hon. members that the motion in question reads as follows:

That this House denounces the government for its refusal to set up a Royal Commission of inquiry on the alleged illegal activities of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service.

I listened with interest to the remarks made by previous speakers and I think that what the opposition is suggesting is not that all activities of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service be abolished but rather—and the Bristow affair was the pretext