

Supply

During its 10 years CSIS has had growing pains. The House of Commons set up a special committee in 1989 to review the CSIS act and the Security Offences Act. The committee had 117 recommendations. Its report called "In Flux but not in Crisis" generally concluded that the system was sound and any reform should be based on the continuance and extension of already established institutions.

The government's response set out its belief that legislative changes in the CSIS act and the Security Offences Act were not needed. Further it was unwilling to contemplate structural changes.

In February 1991 a debate was held on an opposition motion that the House of Commons concur in the committee's report which recommended a parliamentary subcommittee on national security. The subcommittee held its first meeting in June 1991.

On May 3, 1994 this same standing committee on justice and legal affairs re-established the subcommittee on national security which is the committee currently looking into the Bristow affair. The motion was a close vote and almost did not happen.

Let me now turn to the formation of the Security Intelligence Review Committee, euphemistically known as SIRC. In 1984 the then newly installed Tory government announced the initial membership of SIRC. In order to meet the requirements as prescribed in the act as a condition to sit on SIRC, two individuals had to be sworn in as Privy Councillors on the day of their appointments. The politics had begun, the die was cast and suspicions were raised. Naturally, due to the Privy Council appointment requirements, four of the first five appointees were ex-cabinet ministers and the fifth a well placed Quebec City lawyer.

Today we have five politically appointed partisan individuals on the review committee; three from the Tories, one from the Liberals and one from the NDP. This was a Mulroneyism.

What is its function? The security committee is to act as the eyes and ears of the public and Parliament on CSIS. The committee is intended to be independent of the government and its operations but responsible to the Parliament of Canada. The CSIS act provides that its members are appointed by the Governor General in Council after consultation with the leaders of all parties having more than 12 members in the House of Commons.

Is it independent? Is it another politically charged patronage agency made up primarily of Tory cronies? Is it conducting constructive and an apolitical review of CSIS and its activities? We need to know and perhaps the only way is to investigate the investigators.

We do not want to emulate the travesties perpetrated by our neighbours who have created monsters in the form of the CIA. If

we are not vigilant and take the time to review agencies like CSIS after 10 years of work, it is easy to lose control of their function and scope of activity.

• (1335)

Under the legislation SIRC does not have access to cabinet documents. For this reason I suggest that the requirement that members of SIRC have Privy Council designation or past cabinet experience is unnecessary and should be abolished. Instead have individuals cleared by the RCMP and if they meet the top security clearance available they fit.

Why would one require a PC designation when one does not have access to cabinet documents? This change would lend itself to appointing independent members and not has been cabinet members.

I would also like to recommend changes to the length of appointments to SIRC. Currently the five-year appointment allows a former administration to protect itself from a new administration. At the present time we have the first of the Tory appointments to SIRC expiring in December 1996 and the latest one in 1998. All may survive this administration, assuming the next election is held before December 1996. Four or five will survive if the election is held before November 1997.

At the same time the Liberal committee appointee, Michel Robert, the same individual who worked Saturdays and has a non-tendered \$249,000 contract from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, ensures that the current administration has one of its cronies who can keep track of things. It is a joke and nothing more than political patronage that surely does not lend itself to independent review of CSIS operations.

What we need is legislative permanence being granted the parliamentary subcommittee on security and legislative authority as well. This will at least meet the original recommendation of the 1991 review of national security and give us a body whose investigative powers include the ability to investigate cabinet, which SIRC cannot.

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River): Madam Speaker, I want to recognize the very thorough job my colleague opposite has done in preparing and delivering this speech. It was refreshing to hear recalled some items of recent history.

I appreciated the relatively thorough research that he obviously did in relation to the mechanism for appointing members to the Security Intelligence Review Committee. He has articulated a concern in relation to those appointments, i.e., the method by which consultation is or is not done with leaders of the parties in the House of Commons before such appointments are made. This is a point that I raised in the House in the last Parliament.