

Oral Questions

When it was found that this was not the case, the investigation was terminated. The heading on the file did not accurately relate to what the file was about. It was not a file involving an investigation of the leader of the Reform Party.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it was probably a coincidence that they picked the name of Preston Manning for their investigation. Just a coincidence, Mr. Speaker.

I want to ask the Solicitor General how Canadians and Quebecers can be expected to trust the Security Intelligence Review Committee, after its chairman denied the existence of a file on the leader of the Reform Party in December 1994 and its executive director confirmed, in January 1995, the existence of a file, that happened to be under the name "Preston Manning"?

[English]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should give complete information to the House. What the executive director of the Security Intelligence Review Committee said was that in spite of the initial name of the file, it did not relate to the leader of the Reform Party but rather to the investigation of possible financing of an election campaign by a foreign country, which did not turn out to be correct.

I think the hon. member should give the whole story to the House. It would help us have a better question period.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Exactly, Mr. Speaker. We would like to have the whole story in the House. We wonder why the SIRC first denied the existence of the Preston Manning file before committee members and then confirmed that there was a file on the leader of the Reform Party.

Would the Solicitor General agree that the only way to get to the bottom of this, as he claims he wants to do, is to set up a genuinely public and independent commission of inquiry?

• (1420)

[English]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish the hon. member had listened to my answer instead of reading out the question he had already prepared.

My answer made it clear that based on information provided to me by the Security Intelligence Review Committee, the file in question was not about an investigation of the leader of the

Reform Party but about the possible questionable financing by a foreign country of an election campaign.

The Security Intelligence Review Committee, under the statute creating CSIS, is in effect a permanent royal commission with a specific mandate to keep under review the activities of CSIS. The quality of its work has been demonstrated by the comprehensive report of the Heritage Front affair that brought to light the issue about which the hon. member is talking.

While the Security Intelligence Review Committee operates at arm's length from the government, I would think that if the subcommittee wanted to hear further from the Security Intelligence Review Committee on this subject it would be happy to come back to the subcommittee.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence.

On March 16, 1994, I asked the defence minister in this House how senior officers at CFB Petawawa could let 2nd Airborne Commando members go around the base displaying Nazi flags on Canadian Forces vehicles as well as white supremacist and Ku Klux Klan insignia. Almost one year later, the broadcasting of revealing videos spurred the minister into action.

Can the defence minister assure us that the board of inquiry's mandate will not be limited to the events in Somalia because, if it is, we must conclude that dismantling the Airborne Regiment will allow the officers and NCMs who have committed unacceptable acts to avoid punishment by being redeployed to other regiments or even decorated?

[English]

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have already announced publicly that the inquiry will begin as soon as the last court martial is concluded, which will be about the middle of March. It will deal with the Canadian Armed Forces deployment to Somalia in 1992-93; how the regiment was prepared for that deployment; how particular incidents which occurred in Somalia were reported, investigated and handled, both on the ground in Somalia and here in Ottawa at national defence headquarters.

I want to assure the hon. member and Canadians generally that all of the concerns that one might have about the incidents in Somalia and our engagement there will be subject to the inquiry's terms of reference, once the inquiry is established. As I said before, that inquiry will begin as soon as the last court martial is concluded.