

Oral Questions

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Solicitor General cannot remove himself from the responsibility of representing Canadians on this issue.

I will be talking to SIRC tomorrow. This investigation on allegations was from an individual considered by the CSIS investigator as an unknown quality who was self-serving and very opportunistic. It would appear that investigations of this nature can be held with very weak probable cause.

What assurance can the minister give to Canadians that contributors to political parties today are not being investigated by CSIS?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I repeat that this report is a report of an independent commission of inquiry. My role is to bring the report to the attention of the public through this House in the fullest possible manner, which I have done.

With respect to the second part of the member's question, the law adopted by this Parliament makes clear that CSIS is not to investigate lawful acts of protest, dissent or promotion of a cause. I think that is pretty well clear. I hope it will give the reassurance the hon. member is seeking.

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[Translation]

BLOOD SUPPLY SYSTEM

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. On December 5, the minister said that she would rather wait for the public hearings on this issue to be completed before commenting on the blatant lack of rigour endangering the safety of Canada's blood supply system. These hearings were held on December 6 and 7.

Now that the hearings have taken place, will the minister tell us why the Bureau of Biologics does not comply with its own standards, given its responsibility to check the quality of blood products and facilities at all 17 transfusion centres of the Canadian Red Cross Society?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thought the hon. member was going to wish me a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and also congratulate me for the good work I did this year.

Clearly, we worked well and we will continue to do so.

As regards the hon. member's question, I can say that we more than doubled the staff of the bureau. We implemented a number of measures. We are also spending \$11 million on the Krever Commission because we feel this is a very serious issue. Not only do we want our blood supply system to be as good as any, we want it to be the best in the world.

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, words fail me. How can the minister not take this recommendation seriously?

Our blood supply system is blatantly flawed and Canadians are at risk of being contaminated before the end of 1995. This is very serious. Some people are actually dying because of this.

Will the Minister of Health at least have the decency to immediately contact the head of the Bureau of Biologics, who is accountable to her, and clearly tell him that he has the duty to comply with his own safety rules?

● (1440)

[English]

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I take the question very seriously indeed.

Since I became the Minister of Health we have done more in terms of blood safety and inspection of centres and increasing personnel than was done in the previous 10 years.

We did not and I am not waiting for the report of Mr. Krever to take action. We have done everything that we can and we will continue to do everything we can. Meanwhile we are anxiously awaiting to see what other new measures Mr. Krever will ask us to undertake. We will do whatever it takes to guarantee that the blood system in this country is the very best in the world.

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HEALTH CARE

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, five weeks ago the health minister threatened private clinics throughout Canada. She promised swift action and then she vanished, perhaps permanently.

The minister now knows that all provinces struggle to fund health care because this government withdraws from medicare funding.

Will the minister give every province a Christmas present by admitting her political blunder?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I seem to recall during the last election campaign a Reform Party committed to the medicare system in this country. As a matter of fact the leader said he was opposed to user fees and did not want to decrease access to the health care system. I have a quote here which says: "I want to make it absolutely clear that the Reform Party is not promoting private health care deductibles or user fees".

If there is a blunder that has been made during this year it is by the Reform Party. We have kept our word. I am keeping my word. We are going to have medicare in this country not based on how much you can afford to pay, but based on your need for care.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.