

Despite this huge amount coming from the pockets of Canadian and Quebec taxpayers, Parliament only plays a minor role in monitoring the review of CSIS activities. Even reviewing the budget only skims the surface as the CSIS budget amounts, in fact, to a single line in the 1994-95 Estimates. I know from experience that when Mr. Elcock, a senior director of CSIS, appeared before the justice committee I was on, we asked him, to no avail, how these millions of dollars spent on national security were used. We never at any time—the evidence is all around us—received anything even remotely resembling an answer. That is not really surprising since Mr. Elcock has a reputation that probably always precede him.

In this regard, Richard Cléroux, a writer and former reporter with the Toronto-based daily newspaper the *Globe and Mail*, thinks that Mr. Elcock is very intelligent and plays political hardball. He sees him more as a Jesuit than an Oblate and thinks that he would make a formidable opponent of the independency movement.

What is most important is not that he refuses to answer our questions despite being accountable to taxpayers but that he leads an organization that seems to be above government control, that costs over \$200 million a year and whose activities we cannot find out anything about, let alone check. That an organization with millions of dollars at its disposal is beyond our control is rather disquieting. It is troubling for taxpayers and from a national security standpoint. How far can we go in letting people put our money to work and for what reasons?

Talking about CSIS, opinions vary, according to experts. One of the questions we must ask ourselves is this: Could the organizations responsible for our national security with so little monitoring engage in illegal activities? It happened in the past. Let us just say that by asking the question, we are begging the answer to it.

• (1225)

Money can do anything, really. But considering the economic situation, our present state of affairs, and the demographics and the geography of our vast country, could this really happen? Well, yes, it could, but is it likely? Personally, I would say that not only is it likely, it is very likely.

Mr. Jean-Paul Brodeur, a criminology professor at the Université de Montréal, who specializes in intelligence services, among other things, even mentions that the Americans are sometimes taken for a ride, even though they have a much tighter control system than we do, in the form of committees with wide-ranging powers in both houses of Congress.

Who has forgotten the famous Oliver North, who was taking orders from above and literally thumbed his nose at everything else?

Supply

Mrs. Lorraine Lagacé, the former Quebec delegate in Ottawa, under Mr. René Lévesque, has some thoughts on this matter. She says that most English Canadians are not interested in looking at legal mechanisms, that what really counts for them is democracy, but that if they must choose between democratic rules and a united Canada, they will always opt for a united Canada.

That is precisely how they see this issue, so, no matter what the RCMP or CSIS says, the mandate of secret services will always be to save Canada before anything else.

CSIS employees, whom we pay more than \$200 million per year, are not accountable. These people only have to table some kind of report before a pseudo-monitoring committee made up of political appointees. In fact, that review committee must phone CSIS before going to its offices to look into files, and they do not have access to all files. This is what you call transparency!

The public does have the right to know and we, elected representatives, have the basic duty of providing the information. What is happening with the more than \$200 million paid in taxes? CSIS is a monster that nobody can control, not even the government. Consequently, you can imagine what is happening! This is why the Bloc Québécois is asking for a royal commission of inquiry.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I realize that the hon. member stopped after ten minutes. Am I to understand that you are sharing your allotted time with a colleague?

Mr. St-Laurent: Indeed, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Fine. Questions and comments. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Solicitor General.

Mr. Patrick Gagnon (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General): Madam Speaker, the hon. member mentioned again that we have no way of monitoring CSIS activities and referred to events dating back to 1970. We have been through this before. Today, all we want to do is ensure that SIRC can report on the allegations made either by the opposition or people whose rights have supposedly been, shall we say, impinged upon by CSIS.

I wonder if the hon. member would acknowledge that we now have in 1994 a service and a control committee which did not exist earlier on. I understand that this monitoring committee is made up of people tied to the previous government, but the hon. member should recognize that, if a seat at SIRC becomes vacant, we have the obligation to consult the opposition leaders.

• (1230)

So, I would like to know if the hon. member recognizes the existence of provisions in the act setting up SIRC which stipulate that we need to consult the opposition before appointing anyone to this committee?