

Supply

• (1315)

I do not think the taxpayers of Canada and especially those in Quebec will be pleased to learn of that. This motion is an insult to all people of Canada who are so concerned about controlling government spending and getting our economic house in order.

[*Translation*]

M. André Caron (Jonquière): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the excellent speech on CSIS made by my hon. colleague from Durham. It is no doubt necessary, in a modern state, to take special measures in order to ascertain that activities related to espionage, foreign interference and revolutionary subversion are not carried out within a state's territory. I think the member has explained very clearly why there is a need for an organization to monitor these kinds of activities. However, the opposition motion before us today deals with a somewhat different subject.

I am a little sensitive to these questions because my name was on the list of members of the Parti Québécois that was stolen by members of the RCMP's security service in the 1970s. When I had the honour of being elected by the people of Jonquière to represent them in the House of Commons, some of my friends warned me, because I am a known sovereignist, a separatist as many of our colleagues opposite like to say. I was a separatist in the 1960s, and it looks like I am still a separatist in the 1990s.

Mr. Milliken: Yes, and next week you will be a federalist.

Mr. Caron: You may rest assured, my dear colleague from Kingston and the Islands, that I will be a sovereignist for the referendum.

When my friends saw that I was going to Ottawa as a member of Parliament, they told me that I would be under surveillance by the RCMP. I told them that I was not particularly worried because we are in a state governed by the rule of law and I did not think such a threat was real.

When I look at the issue before us today, I realize that CSIS seems to have taken questionable measures. But I am not supposed to worry because we have a review committee. I do not want to know what is going on in CSIS, but I want to rest assured that it is well supervised and monitored. However, present members of the review committee have been appointed by the previous government, and parties then represented in this House had their say in those appointments. There are three Conservatives, on Liberal and one New Democrat sitting on this committee. I imagine they are all good federalists, and people with a certain vision of Canada.

I do not trust those members. Sad to say, I do not trust them to see to it that my rights as a Canadian and a Quebecer are respected by CSIS. I am not sure they will do it. The Reform

Party was infiltrated by CSIS, and I am not sure the same thing did not happen with the Bloc Québécois.

Those issues are important. People are sceptical and the present review committee cannot set their minds at peace. Does my hon. colleague think it would be important, for the sake of democracy, to have a royal commission of inquiry even if there are costs involved? I think that in view of the present membership of the review committee, we should spend whatever money is needed. Would the hon. member for Durham agree that a royal commission should go to the bottom of those allegations made in the media about the Canadian Security Intelligence Service?

• (1320)

[*English*]

Mr. Shepherd: Madam Speaker, the essence of the hon. member's question is whether CSIS is accountable. I went through the process and CSIS seems to be just as accountable as every other government department through Parliament. That is a fundamental of our democratic system.

It is a ludicrous assumption to me if we are saying that a royal commission is needed every time something has to be investigated, whether it has to do with CSIS, the Department of Industry or anything else. What would be the purpose of Parliament if we resorted to a royal commission every time a problem arose? We have made too much use of royal commissions and studies. The Library of Parliament is full of them, many of which are just collecting dust. What we are saying is that to move away from that process is a total disregard of our parliamentary traditions.

More important is the cost. Clearly, the cost would be justifiable if there was an invasion of civil liberties, but the reality is that we have the functions here. There are all kinds of systems which scrutinize CSIS. Why spend the extra money? With the deficit running at billions of dollars it seems totally ludicrous that we would even think about a royal commission on something that already has tremendous investigative advantages.

Ms. Margaret Bridgman (Surrey North): Madam Speaker, I would like the hon. member to clarify a couple of points in relation to the actual function of CSIS. I thank him for the overview.

It is my understanding from his presentation that CSIS was actually born from the RCMP out of a need to counteract Russian spying at that time. Since the cold war has ended and the Berlin wall has dropped the need which originally called for the start up of CSIS is gone.

When the cold war existed 80 per cent of CSIS activity was in counterintelligence which falls under the national security point of the two points outlined. Considering there is now no cold war tends to imply that the public safety component of CSIS should probably go back to the RCMP. It seems to be an early warning system and once it is identified is referred to the appropriate