

Private Members' Business

the intrusive actions of this particular agency, or I should say potentially intrusive, on Canadians.

There are no written rules by way of statute or regulations. There may be written rules that the chief from time to time issues or the deputy clerk, or the deputy minister, or the Minister of National Defence. If there are written rules in effect they are unknown rules, certainly unknown by the people of Canada.

Without public scrutiny I maintain there is a credible argument to say there are no proper controls. After all if everything is done behind closed doors how can one ever know if the controls were properly applied? What is more important, there is no monitoring to ensure that laws are not being broken and that if laws are broken that there is some mechanism to deal with that. To me that is a major potential problem.

Contrast this to our own spy agency. We do not call this a spy agency; we call it the Communications Security Establishment. However our own spy agency which we acknowledge is a spy agency was created under statute by this Parliament. It was given rules by this Parliament. It reports to a minister who then reports to this House yearly. It is required in effect to be monitored by the Security Intelligence Review Committee, which as I said is a civilian agency.

I have to ask myself, if it is good enough for our spy agency why is it not good enough for our Communications Security Establishment? Indeed, this is not some flash that I had. This was recognized in the parliamentary committee report "In Flux but not in Crisis" that my various colleagues have talked about. It recommended not only as this motion does that SIRC should review CSE's work, but also that CSE should be formally created by statute.

• (1905)

I certainly support both of those recommendations which indeed were unanimous. I cannot see any logical basis in a democracy not to have the Parliament of Canada through some committee review this agency. I am pleased therefore to support the motion.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for months now the official opposition has been alerting the government about this national security problem. The opposition has questioned the government repeatedly in an attempt to find out who controlled whom, who ordered this or that job, exactly who asked for which investigation, but has never been given an answer.

And yet some questions were easy to answer. We were just asking for the names of people who are paid out of Canadian and Quebec taxpayers' money, but to no avail. I personally asked, in all sincerity, who was controlling the spies in this country,

specifically with regard to CSE, but never got any answer. The official opposition received no satisfactory answer and neither did millions of Quebecers and Canadians. This is clear from the newspapers and editorials.

Our worries began with the disconcerting revelations about the illegal activities of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. These were followed by the new revelations about the Communications Security Establishment, which only added to our fears and confirmed that nobody was keeping an eye on the spies in this country, which prides itself on being democratic and one of the best countries in the world.

After weeks of waiting, what is the government offering us to set our minds, and those of taxpayers, at rest? Nothing. Finally, a government backbencher was moved to present the following motion: "That, in the opinion of this House, the government should amend the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act to authorize the Security Intelligence Review Committee to review the operations of the Communications Security Establishment". This is a very telling motion, one which confirms our concerns and one which, in particular, proves that the official opposition was right.

First of all, the member is to be congratulated for having understood the official opposition's indignation on this issue. He is unfortunately one of the few to have understood our legitimate concerns, or rather he is one of the rare members of the present Liberal government who, upon crossing the floor, did not change his position on national security.

Need I remind you that when they were in opposition, the Liberals demanded exactly what we have been demanding for months, that is, more parliamentary control over spy organizations in Canada? We only have to read House and committee minutes to see that, in their lean years, the Liberals were calling for more openness. The times have changed now that their bellies are full. True, the carelessness and lack of action are typical of current-day Liberals, but it is still amazing in this field.

I must conclude that we will have to be satisfied with this motion when disclosures and allegations of illegal activities by the CSE are increasing and suspicion becomes the rule. What will this motion accomplish? Will this proposed amendment, if it is adopted, reassure taxpayers? Will the proposed amendment allow us to find out exactly what the Communications Security Establishment does and how it uses the \$250 million—which is a very conservative estimate on my part—that this federal agency spends every year? This is a legitimate question we have a right to ask ourselves.

My constituents in the riding of Berthier—Montcalm are asking themselves this very question, and for good reason. To find out the answers, we must look at what the Security Intelligence Review Committee or SIRC has done in the past.