

*Oral Questions*

• (1425)

[English]

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Quebecois just said that it has given us suggestions in terms of deficit reduction of some \$15 billion. I hate to contradict their mathematics, but the number is nowhere near that. In fact it is not even one third of that.

That being said, what really must be done in this House by the opposition, and indeed the Reform Party have done it in part and have said they are going to do it before the budget, is to give us a comprehensive plan. It is quite easy to make great speeches. It is quite easy to set out targets with no background. But what is very, very difficult is to do the line by line study that allows us to deal with the profound structural problems of our economy and the way that governments spend.

In the month and a half that the opposition is going to have off, I would invite them to sit down and really work up a proper plan so that when we come down with the budget we can have an intelligent debate.

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**SECURITY INTELLIGENCE REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the SIRC report on the Bristow affair brought forward this morning is a whitewash. It does not adequately address the Reform Party's primary concern, namely that a paid agent of the former Progressive Conservative government allegedly tried to build links between Reform and extremist groups for the purposes of discrediting Reform in an election.

The Mulroney—Campbell administration may or may not have known what Grant Bristow was doing but they were certainly aware of his activities and they were in a position to use that information for political advantage.

Will the Solicitor General tell this House why SIRC did not more thoroughly investigate this particular concern and what he intends to do about it?

**Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Security Intelligence Review Committee was created by an act of Parliament, adopted by this House and the other place, to operate at arm's length from CSIS, at arm's length from the minister, at arm's length from the government. In short, it operates very much like a permanent commission of inquiry. It presented its report. I tabled that report in the House today.

I understand the hon. leader's question. However, I think that question would best be put to SIRC itself. I understand its members are appearing before a subcommittee of the justice committee tomorrow. That would be a very good vehicle for asking such questions.

**Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, sections of the SIRC report read like a who's who of the Tory party. Their names are sprinkled throughout the report: Lewis, Jelinek, Dobbie, Segal, Sparrow, Campbell. Many of these people were reported to have had meetings with key players in the Bristow affair and were involved in smear campaigns against the Reform Party. Yet, in interview after interview with these former Tory politicians, SIRC avoided asking the key hard questions.

Will the Solicitor General agree that a committee like SIRC composed of political partisans investigating alleged improprieties by politicians makes a mockery of natural justice and discredits the internal security system in this country?

**Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the members of the Security Intelligence Review Committee are appointed by order in council in exactly the same way as a short term commission of inquiry. They have the fullest powers to investigate, to seek documents, to question people under oath and they are in a position to complete a full and comprehensive report into matters they look into. That is what they have done. That report is before us for questioning and also is before us to use as a resource to make sure that CSIS is operating in a way required by law.

I suggest to the hon. leader of the Reform Party that he take another look at the report. Its basic purpose was to investigate allegations about the conduct of CSIS not about the conduct of political figures. It has done this job. I suggest that he and his colleagues follow up their concerns by addressing their questions directly to the members of SIRC when they appear before the parliamentary subcommittee or for that matter, seeking out meetings with them directly.

• (1430)

**Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, today's SIRC report on the Bristow affair highlights the inadequacies of checks and balances on CSIS. It is also clear that the mechanisms for monitoring the activities of CSIS are ineffectual. They are open to political manipulation by virtue of the patronage appointments to the Security Intelligence Review Committee.

Will the minister agree that the highly political and completely ineffectual Security Intelligence Review Committee should be done away with? Will he agree that the parliamentary subcommittee on national security should be made the watchdog of CSIS and should be given the teeth to do the job?