

Secrecy is also required to protect certain operational activities like staff distribution, modes of operation and sources of information. Everybody recognizes that secrecy as an end in itself does not serve anyone.

I have touched on the kind of security intelligence system that Parliament wanted to meet the needs of democracy, and I have touched on some of the real threats that make such a system a necessity in a democracy.

I am only echoing the words of the Solicitor General when I say that we do not need to set up a royal commission of inquiry, because we already have in place systems like the SIRC, that have the wide powers necessary to conduct an in-depth inquiry.

Therefore, before deciding on anything, let us wait until the Security Intelligence Review Committee has completed its job and submitted its report to the Solicitor General. This should be done shortly. Once the report has been submitted, as parliamentarians we will be able to take the necessary steps.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague for his very enlightening speech. I also want to congratulate him on making his remarks entirely in French, from beginning to end, which is a first in this House for him.

If I understood the member correctly, the Solicitor General rubber-stamps special mandates, and one must trust that everything is in order since the agency publishes a new annual report every year.

• (1210)

I read the report made public in 1993. It is a ten-page document, with each page only half full to make room for some very interesting graphics. It is not with such a report, that would hardly meet grade 12 standards, that we are going to reassure the population regarding certain allegations.

The Bloc Québécois has never questioned the need for such an agency. I believe that any self-respecting nation ought to have this kind of agency; there is no doubt about that. The point we raised is that allegations were made and if the Solicitor General approves everything, this means that he knew that someone was spying on the Reform Party from within. This is intolerable.

That is why, in case of allegations, one must go beyond the annual report. Do you know how difficult it is to get into CSIS? It takes about one hour to get all the doors unlocked. If they see you coming, they obviously have the time to put any file they do not want you to see in false-bottom drawers. There is no guarantee that an investigation can get all the facts. If something is secret, top secret, or top, top, top secret, obviously you will not find it lying on a table. It will be securely locked up in a file drawer nobody has access to.

Supply

How can we guarantee that an investigation will get to the bottom of things? That is what we are wondering. This is the reason why we say that it is all nice and dandy to wait for the report, but the allegations are too serious. We are just about to enter very difficult times in Canada. We are no fools, but we want to make sure that what happened in 1970 will not happen again. We do not want to see history repeat itself. We want to go through this difficult transition as adults and in accordance with democratic principles, not with a top secret service which is going to plant bombs whenever it pleases.

So I ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Solicitor General how can he guarantee that we are protected from such an occurrence?

Mr. Gagnon: Madam Speaker, first of all, the allegations made before CIRC about CSIS will be examined. This is not an annual report, but rather a report that will examine the issues and the allegations that have been made against the intelligence service by the opposition. I must conclude, however, that there are members on this side of the House who are on the sub-committee looking at allegations about our security intelligence service.

I can also tell you that, in answer to the member for Rimouski—Témiscouata, one of the things we have recognized, particularly with respect to the CIRC and CSIS, is that it is unacceptable that such a group be asked to spy on a legitimate political party. I think that everyone in this House recognizes that this is not the goal of this government and that if it has already been done—I was not there then—but I can tell you this: I know these are difficult times, but I am nevertheless happy to hear that the hon. member recognizes the importance of having an intelligence service with a mandate to ensure Canada's integrity, particularly in light of the industrial and technological espionage that we see nowadays.

I can assure the member that it is not the goal of the service to spy on political groups.

[English]

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley): Madam Speaker, I would like to react to comments made by the hon. member from the Bloc who said that she is afraid these secrets are in hidden boxes, locked in drawers and cabinets. I think the reality is that these secret documents are passed around by staffers. They are taken home. They are left in open boxes in basements. We should be concerned about the lack of security of classified documents.

My question for the Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada is this. Is the hon. member aware of how these documents are classified?