

## GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

**Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister.

On four separate occasions in recent days my colleagues and I have raised the issue of Mr. Arni Thorsteinson's appointment to the board of directors of the Bank of Canada 16 days after his companies defaulted on mortgages, making Canadians liable for up to \$6 million worth of debt.

Why did the government neglect to tell us that Arni Thorsteinson was moonlighting as the president and chairman of another Crown corporation, Petro-Canada Limited? What is he going to do about it?

**Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)):** Madam Speaker, Mr. Thorsteinson was on the former board of directors of Petro-Canada. When Petro-Canada was privatized Petro-Canada Inc. held the responsibility of managing the debt of Petro-Canada and to make sure that the debt was erased. He has done an excellent job and as a matter of fact paid a dividend cheque from defeasance fees to the Government of Canada for their accounts over the last year.

For the hon. member to stand up here and make that silly accusation is totally unparliamentary and unbecoming of him as a member of this House.

**Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell):** Madam Speaker, that sounds like the comments the Prime Minister made last week, two days after another minister said that we were right in asking the questions and quite right in asking for the person's resignation.

• (1455)

Yesterday the Minister of Public Works said in response to a question: "After all, the opposition quite properly pointed out some difficulties. Upon consideration of them, it does appear that it is not appropriate for Mr. Thorsteinson to continue with this appointment".

I want to ask the minister if it was so inappropriate for this person to hold public office yesterday, why is it so appropriate today?

## Oral Questions

**Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)):** Madam Speaker, Mr. Thorsteinson has been in this job for some time and has done a good job. The job at Petro-Canada Inc. is winding up and therefore I have no regrets whatsoever that Mr. Thorsteinson ran Petro-Canada Inc. He did an excellent job and his record speaks for itself.

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## NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Hon. William Rompkey (Labrador):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister.

In May I raised a question with him about an expenditure of \$43,000 for the Somali board of inquiry which will last 90 days. I was wrong. The cost of the inquiry is more like \$225,000 including furniture, computer equipment and renovations.

When there is empty office space in this town and computers not in use, how can the government justify spending \$225,000 on an inquiry that lasts 90 days?

**Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member was correct when he said he was wrong.

He said that the commission spent \$43,000 buying furniture. Wrong. The furniture was valued at \$43,000 and they have rented it for the duration of the inquiry.

He said that computer equipment has been bought. He is partially right. The computer equipment is something DND has had in its acquisition program. It has been purchased, will be used by the inquiry and then will become part of DND's inventory to look after its needs.

Every step of the way, care is being taken by the commission and by DND to ensure the inquiry is done in the most cost-efficient manner possible. I think the hon. member should give credit to the integrity of the people involved. He should recognize they appreciate it is the taxpayers' money and they are acting responsibly.

**Hon. William Rompkey (Labrador):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate that it is taxpayers' money and I appreciate that care should be taken to control the expenditure involved. Bearing that in mind let me ask the minister: