

Routine Proceedings

The person who did her job, who was independent from the government, and who was protecting the public interest does not get her term renewed. In effect she gets canned for doing her job. That is what the government did.

At the same time as the government is trying to tell us that these appointments are all above board and that there is absolutely no scent of political interference, after it kicked Inger Hansen out of her job, which most Canadians thought she was doing quite well thank you very much, it plucked from the trough Bruce Phillips.

I am not going to be as gracious as my colleague for Cape Breton—The Sydneys. Bruce Phillips may be the nicest man in the world; he might be one of the best journalists in the world, but the fact is that this is the third time that he has changed troughs. He was in one with the Prime Minister's Office where he was basically the propaganda officer for the Prime Minister.

The Minister of Justice said it. She said that Bruce Phillips, when he was in the Prime Minister's Office as the communications officer—and I am quoting and you can check it in *Hansard* tomorrow—“had a commitment to the success of the Prime Minister”.

Ms. Campbell (Vancouver Centre): I didn't say that, I am sorry. Your own colleague said that and I was quoting him.

Mr. MacDonald (Dartmouth): Our colleague, the member for Victoria, indicated that Bruce Phillips was most recently a communications officer down in Washington, again a political appointment. Now he relies for his third job, on another political appointment by the Prime Minister of Canada. This time it is a political appointment as an officer of Parliament.

Does the member for Victoria agree that just as the old adage indicates, which I am just going to change a little, that these officers of Parliament, in this case Bruce Phillips and the office he has now been appointed to as the Privacy Commissioner, must not just operate outside the sphere of political influence but must also appear to operate completely outside the sphere of political influence?

Is that the primary concern of my colleague from Victoria? It is not so much that Bruce Phillips in this

position is going to be spreading secrets and looking into personal files, but that as an officer of Parliament he must command the respect of the Canadian public to do his job as the Privacy Commissioner?

Is the member trying to say that he is a little concerned that some Canadians are going to find it very, very difficult to believe the line of the government that this is an independent appointment clear of politics?

Mr. Volpe: Yes will do.

Mr. Brewin: It is suggested, Mr. Speaker, that my reply should be a simple yes. I am going to add a phrase however because I do not entirely agree.

I am not simply concerned with appearances. I am concerned that we do not know enough about Mr. Phillips to justify the appointment. I believe that because he served in the Prime Minister's Office there is a very serious likelihood that he is not qualified for the position, because of this connection. However I do not know that for sure, and I believe the appropriate action is to have this matter referred to the justice committee.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. I wanted to ask the hon. member to comment on the concerns that have been expressed by perhaps one of the most respected international experts in the area of privacy. I am speaking of Professor David Flaherty of the University of Western Ontario.

The most recent report of the Privacy Commissioner, John Grace, refers to him as an internationally recognized authority on data protection who served as consultant to the justice committee in its review of the Privacy Act, who has been quoted extensively, and who has written extensively on this subject. Quite clearly Professor Flaherty is recognized as Canada's leading expert on privacy. He has no political axe to grind whatsoever.

Professor Flaherty has indicated that he is disgusted by the appointment of Bruce Phillips. He says that the appointment ruins the integrity of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner.

That is not the word of a member of this House; that is the word of Professor David Flaherty who as I say is a respected individual and probably knows more about privacy than anyone else in the country.