

Supply

the Hon. Minister realizes that something like this could light the powder keg and destroy all the goodwill that has been built up. I am sure he realizes that none of us want this, and I hope the Minister will respond to a request by the Cree regional authority and the Assembly of First Nations and arrange a meeting with them, and that he will provide an explanation through the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney).

Mr. Masse: I could not agree more with the Hon. Member. It is unfortunate that a political party should use a document that is not official to scare the Native peoples, at a time when we must find ways, and that is what the Government is doing, within the framework of a dialogue with the provinces and the Native peoples, to find a solution within the framework of the Canadian Constitution.

I think the Hon. Member was absolutely right to deplore, without necessarily saying so but that is what she was thinking, I am sure, that a political party should use a document which it knows perfectly well is not the Government's official document, to scare people. And that is what is so unfortunate, and I think the New Democratic Party is showing incredible intellectual dishonesty in this debate. What this political party is seeking above all is its own personal interests, its interests as a party and not those of the Indians. They are trying to build their future on a foundation of intellectual dishonesty, and I am convinced that both Indians and Canadians will remember how these people managed to spread fear and disrupt the dialogue between the Indians and the Government, a dialogue that is absolutely essential. And if that dialogue and the constitutional amendments materialize, and I sincerely hope they do, it will be thanks to the Prime Minister's initiative and not to the unfortunate action taken by the New Democratic Party.

● (1600)

[English]

Mr. Manly: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Minister's references to intellectual dishonesty sound rather strange coming from a member of the Conservative Party. If members of the Conservative Party are concerned about intellectual honesty, let them release the 396-page task force report, which is not a Cabinet document and does not need to be protected by any cloak of secrecy. Let them come clean about the whole status of this other document of which we have been speaking.

How is it possible for a high-level task force appointed by the Deputy Prime Minister to bring forth a report that is so completely at variance with the rhetoric of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Indian Affairs? How is it possible for that task force to do its job in complete isolation from everything the Prime Minister is supposed to have been saying for the last six months?

[Translation]

Mr. Masse: Mr. Speaker, such a question could only come from our friends of the New Democratic Party. Not quite used

to discussions and research work, rather inclined to accept as the final word any instruction from higher-up, they just do not seem to know how a Government operates. The Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Nielsen) set up a series of discussion meetings to review existing programs in all Departments. Any new Government coming into office has to review such programs. Within that context and as a result of lengthy discussions, documents are produced. It is quite possible that a document such as the one referred to—I have not seen it, it might just be the twenty-seventh version preceding the one we have now—has somehow been leaked to you by somebody, and you are now trying to claim that it represents Government policy. That is very dishonest, and you know it.

Mr. Speaker, Government policy will be made public by someone whose responsibility it is to do that, not by public officials who leak bits and pieces of committee proceedings in brown envelopes. The Hon. Member and his Party are aware of that. They are trying to play a game of political one-upmanship with a document they got through a nameless sender.

[English]

Mr. Manly: Mr. Speaker, we would understand the Government's position much better if it were prepared to release the final reports to this House so that Members could see them and so that the Indian people could see them as well. What kind of policy guidelines were given to the task force when it began its work? Did it operate in complete isolation from the professed policy of the Prime Minister and the Minister responsible or was there some kind of dialogue? What guidelines were given to the task force?

[Translation]

Mr. Masse: Mr. Speaker, in answer to the first part of the question, I will say that it is obvious that the government is going to make public its policy in due course, when it has completed its discussions with everybody. It will make public the government policy when it comes to the conclusion that the policy should be made public.

Secondly, as far as the guidelines which were given are concerned, I will point out that the programs must be reviewed; groups of people in all areas are entitled to their own ideas. However, the fact that, at a certain time, some people expressed a certain idea is not reason enough to make it government policy in the end. It is a step whereby some people expressed some ideas. But the government policy will be made public either by the Right Hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) or by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Crombie) when it is felt that it is in the public interest to disclose what the government policy will be in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): The question and answer period is now over. The Hon. Member for Mount Royal (Mrs. Finestone).