

Oral Questions

[English]

SOCIAL INSURANCE

USE OF SIN

Mr. Jack Hare (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue, but in his absence and in the absence of his parliamentary secretary I will direct it to the Deputy Prime Minister.

If a person has fears, when using his social insurance number to cash bonds, that such number might be used for other purposes, could the person invent a nine-digit social insurance number or ask the bank to supply one for him?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I will be glad to take that question as notice.

Mr. Hare: Mr. Speaker, I have a copy of a letter from the former revenue minister to a constituent of mine, indicating there should be no fear in the use of the SI number in the cashing of bond interest coupons. The hon. senator stated that the number could only be used for internal use and it would not in any way threaten the civil liberties and privacy of Canadian citizens. He further stated, and I quote—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Does the hon. member have a supplementary question? If so, he should put the question.

Mr. Hare: Yes, Mr. Speaker. This letter states the number can be invented. Is the idea of inventing a social insurance number one of government policy, and is it now in operation? If so, the ramifications are horrendous.

An hon. Member: Come on, Allan.

Mr. MacEachen: What is the question?

An hon. Member: Can the number be invented?

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TRANSPORT

AUDITOR GENERAL'S STUDY OF DEPARTMENTAL PROCEDURES—CRITICISM BY DEPUTY MINISTER

Mr. Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board. It arises out of a report in the Ottawa *Citizen* of Friday that the Deputy Minister of Transport, a senior civil servant, had attacked the methods and procedures used by the Auditor General in fulfilling the mandate given him by this House.

Was the President of the Treasury Board aware of the remarks the Deputy Minister of Transport made, and does he support the view of this senior official of government that complying with the Auditor General's recommendations could cause more harm than good?

[Mr. Ouellet.]

Hon. Judd Buchanan (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I was not aware of the remarks made by the Deputy Minister of Transport.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, given the fact that the Auditor General is a servant of parliament and not of the government, and that the House has established a public accounts committee to receive the Auditor General's reports, to receive the government's reactions thereto and the government's criticisms, if any, is it the position of the President of the Treasury Board—and would he take this position by way of direction, if necessary—that all criticisms by senior officials or, indeed, by ministers, of the Auditor General should be directed through the Standing Committee on Public Accounts; and would he, further, confirm that the recommendations of the Auditor General sanctioned by the committee are to be obeyed even if the public service finds it inconvenient?

Mr. Buchanan: Mr. Speaker, I think all of us, as parliamentarians, expect the Auditor General to discharge his obligations to this House and carry out the terms of the legislation governing his activities.

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HEALTH AND WELFARE

CHILD TAX CREDIT PROGRAM

Mr. Bob Rae (Broadview): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of National Health and Welfare: it concerns Bill C-10, the bill which gives \$200 per child for those Canadians earning less than \$18,000 per annum.

I would like to know which provinces have made commitments with respect to their welfare legislation which would allow welfare recipients in those provinces to receive the \$200 tax credit without suffering a reduction in welfare benefits as a result of receiving this additional income; and, in particular, what is the situation with respect to the province of Alberta?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, some provinces have made a commitment to pass on fully the additional benefits for individual Canadians regarding the GIS. Unfortunately, with respect to the child tax credit, no province has made that commitment yet, although six have recommended it to their cabinets: these are Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Ontario, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. I understand that Quebec has Bill 118 before its National Assembly right now, but I was not informed, nor did I get a copy of it. As for the province of Alberta, I received a letter last week saying that they do not know how they will deal with it yet. Personally, I think it is about time they did notwithstanding my numerous letters, telexes and federal-provincial meetings. I hope all members of parliament will join me by doing the same, making sure that individual benefits to Canadians go to them and are not to be considered additional transfer payments to provinces.