

of the parliamentary press gallery complained because, notwithstanding that this person was an enormously able and pleasant individual, her lack of journalistic credentials meant that she did not understand the constraints under which the press gallery worked. They complained quite severely about this. They felt that the premier should hire a journalist to do that job, someone who understood how they work and how they should be served. The director of communications in the office of a first minister is someone who is a liaison between those whose beat it is to cover the first minister and Parliament, who requires quick access to information, and who requires the provision of certain kinds of services and, of course, the first minister himself or herself.

After the premiership changed in British Columbia, the current premier in fact did hire a professional journalist to perform that job. Previous to Mr. Phillips taking that job in the Prime Minister's Office, as we know, Mr. Gratton held that position.

It is extremely important that members understand that that is a position that requires professionalism. It requires someone who understands how journalism functions in this country. If we are to say that any professional journalist who takes that job is thereafter tainted and cannot either, as Mr. Gratton did, return to journalistic life or take some other position without being tainted by what is in fact a very tiny part of his or her career, as opposed to the broad bulk of that career which has been an unimpeachable and award winning career in journalism, then I think that has very, very negative implications for the ability of governments to have the highest quality people serving them. Therefore, it is incumbent on those who wish to impugn Mr. Phillip's ability to provide some kind of evidence that he is not able to act with independence.

I would point out that in the period of time that he has been Assistant Privacy Commissioner, he has participated in putting together the report on drug testing that is very critical of the government. Mr. Phillips has clearly found it quite within his capability to take an independent view and provide and participate in the creation of a report that is critical of the government. Unless hon. members have some firm reason for suggesting that Mr. Phillips is unable to revert to that kind of independence—

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Mr. Gauthier: His record is surely not very good. Look what he did during the election. He was a Tory hack and you know it.

Ms. Campbell (Vancouver Centre): When he worked in the Prime Minister's office, he was loyal to his employer and he did that job. The fact of the matter is that he has had a distinguished journalistic career for which he has been recognized by his peers in journalism. He has now moved on to a different stage in his career.

Mr. Milliken: Keep him moving!

Mr. Gauthier: Send him to the Senate.

Ms. Campbell (Vancouver Centre): I am sorry, but the hon. member's party has already filled up most of the seats in the Senate, so the Senate is not available.

Mr. Gauthier: There are 12 vacancies.

Mr. McDermid: He has a lot of nerve talking about political hacks.

Ms. Campbell (Vancouver Centre): In addition to being highly knowledgeable about the journalistic approach to information in need of secrecy, as is the current incumbent, he also has a very clear understanding of the government perspective as well. I think that balance will serve him well in the position.

It is extremely unsavoury to listen to members of the House of Commons impugn someone's character. As I mentioned yesterday, the hon. member for Burnaby—Kingsway's party probably does not have a realistic hope of forming a government, but those sitting right across from me do harbour that hope. The ability of a government to retain the services of professionals and to invite people, many of whom serve with great cuts in pay in order to provide public service. If everyone who comes to work for a government has to take with them the partisan label of that government, the pool—

Mr. Gauthier: He is working for Parliament, not government. That is the point.

Ms. Campbell (Vancouver Centre): I am speaking of Mr. Phillips' tenure in the Prime Minister's office. If everyone who agrees to work for government has to take with them the partisan taint of that government, the pool of people who would be willing to make their services