

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I want to ask the Deputy Prime Minister a couple of specific questions. Were the Minister of Finance's recent accusations on the floor of the House with respect to the Leader of the Opposition as a result of a strategic distribution of material obtained by the crew that is working out of the Prime Minister's Office?

● (1500)

I also want to ask him—and he should know it—whether or not any official in the embassy in Washington facilitated or assisted in the obtaining of this information by Mr. Crenna?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge it would not be necessary to secure the help of an embassy official to drop into a public office, make out an application and pay a fee to obtain documents which are generally available. It would be quite unnecessary to call upon the services of the embassy to conduct a purely information gathering activity, not a covert activity as the Hon. Member wants to continue to say against all the facts.

SECURITY SERVICE INQUIRY

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister did not answer the question with respect to the recent reprehensible actions of the Minister of Finance when he had scoured the files on the Leader of the Opposition in various government Departments, including his own. I want the Deputy Prime Minister to answer the question as to whether this was connected in any way with this particular endeavour. Also I want to ask him whether or not he can give an iron clad assurance, in terms of the law enforcement powers of the Government, through the Solicitor General or otherwise, or through any security service, that there is no use of these facilities with respect to obtaining information about the Leader of the Opposition or any other Member of Parliament.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I have already answered similar questions by the Leader of the New Democratic Party. It is obvious that the Opposition will not stop at anything in order to make unfounded allegations. Now he is suggesting that the Government is using the Security Service. That is a pretty baseless, unjustified, and cheap allegation.

Privilege—Mr. Nielsen

PRIVILEGE

MR. NIELSEN—REPORTED INVESTIGATION OF LEADER OF OPPOSITION

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I raise a question of privilege arising out of the exchanges in today's Question Period. It is a very grave and probably the most serious matter to have come before the House, certainly in my experience.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nielsen: I know the Government—

An Hon. Member: In 30 years?

Mr. Nielsen: I know government Members do not take it seriously, but I take very seriously any attempt by the Government to intimidate Members of the House of Commons in the execution of their duties through the threat of the release of confidential or private information about Members of the House, because that is what we are dealing with here.

We are dealing with public servants and hired agents used to dredge up material against the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition (Mr. Mulroney), a despicable action, unworthy of a Prime Minister's Office.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nielsen: We have been given a glimpse, Sir, into the inner workings of the office of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), and what has come out is not such as to encourage or reassure Canadians who continue to believe that a Prime Minister represents all the people, that the Public Service, paid out of the public Treasury, is outside of politics, and that Canadians can rely on impartiality in the organs of government. The Prime Minister's Office, particularly that part of it within the parameters of the Public Service, is just such a government organism. It should be prepared to treat all Canadians with that measure of even-handed justice to which the Prime Minister is so fond of referring. Instead, we have evidence of a perversion of the organs of government in a way which has never been experienced in this country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nielsen: The action of taking out files on one's political opponents, of setting out to investigate the private, not the public, activities of an Opposition is common in secondary military governments, petty dictatorships and totalitarian societies. It has no place in a parliamentary democracy, and this is not the first time that this kind of conduct has occurred under a Liberal government.

There was an occasion when a Liberal Prime Minister used the RCMP to go through the files for a decade to find material discreditable to the Opposition. An inquiry was set up which a former Prime Minister of the country, then Leader of the Opposition, the late Right Hon. John Diefenbaker, refused to attend. Since then the politicization of our institutions has advanced by leaps and bounds. We have a Prime Minister who