

*Routine Proceedings*

somebody—to move the second motion wherein the Minister of Justice asks for approval of the appointment of Bruce Phillips as Privacy Commissioner.

We have no objection at all to John Grace being appointed as the Information Commissioner. Why the did minister not call that appointment first and get it over with?

**Ms. Campbell (Vancouver Centre):** Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps I wanted the hon. member to have an opportunity to debate while he was still fresh.

**Mr. Gauthier:** That is a very fresh remark, Mr. Speaker. However, the question is a serious one.

Why is the government not proceeding with something it knows it can get? It knows that it is going to prejudice the appointment of Mr. Grace by delaying it until, perhaps, later this month? Why is the government not proceeding now with Mr. Grace's appointment which causes no difficulties?

We know Mr. Grace, his reputation is well-known, and he has been seven years in the position of Privacy Commissioner. We are asking the government to give us the appointment now and we will approve it now.

**Ms. Campbell:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know why the hon. member objects to the particular order. As I say, if this appointment is one that will be debated and is contentious in the House, then I think it is appropriate to deal with it first so that we can have as full a debate as is possible and is appropriate.

**Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Justice to respond to the concern that has been raised regarding the appointment of Bruce Phillips, precisely because he did, in fact work directly in the office of the Prime Minister as the Prime Minister's Director of Communications. The minister has pointed out that other public officials, including John Grace, have distinguished backgrounds in journalism.

Inger Hansen, the former Information Commissioner, certainly has a distinguished background. She was previously Privacy Commissioner and, during part of that time, Commissioner of Corrections. I might say that the treatment of Inger Hansen by the government is appall-

ing and unacceptable in the way that it has just dumped her without any form of respect or consideration. But that is a separate question.

I want to ask the Minister of Justice to respond to the specific concern that it is fundamentally important that this office, which after all is an officer of Parliament, should be seen by all Canadians as being completely independent. By appointing an individual who has been working directly in the office of the Prime Minister she taints that independence. As Professor David Flaherty has indicated, this completely diminishes the significance and the importance of this office.

Could the Minister of Justice respond to that particular concern about the close previous link between Bruce Phillips and the Prime Minister's Office? Does she not recognize that it is that link, in the eyes of the public, which disqualifies him from being seen as completely independent in this very important position of Privacy Commissioner?

**Ms. Campbell (Vancouver Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I think the link depends to a great extent on the characterization and the hon. member chooses to characterize it in the worst possible way, in a way that I do not think is fair.

As I pointed out yesterday, the current incumbent of the office of Privacy Commissioner was appointed by a previous Liberal government. He was appointed by a Liberal government to the CRTC and has close personal ties with senior members of the Liberal Party. It has never occurred to us that in any way impaired his ability to perform in a professional fashion. I have the good fortune to know him personally. I would be very surprised if he votes for my party, but that has never impaired his ability to perform in a very professional way. I have never assumed that reports coming from his office that were critical of our government were motivated by any partisan considerations at all.

I want to point out the implications of somebody in Mr. Phillips' position spending time in the Prime Minister's Office.

When I was executive director of the premier's office in British Columbia, we had a press secretary director of communications who was not a journalist. The members