

Inquiries of the Ministry

ment of the Minister of Justice. Is he saying that the opinions of law officers of the Crown are not available to the House of Commons? Only a few days ago did he not speak about a couple of bills before Parliament and say they had been declared to be within the power of Parliament?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Annapolis—

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, the answer is given by silence because it is a fact. Now I ask the Prime Minister, as he smiles and sneers at Parliament in a way that he has not exceeded at any time in the past, what was the purpose or reason for including the word "honest" in referring to the conduct of the Auditor General? Were his criticisms honest? Is an opportunity to be had in order to have the matter brought before the House of Commons? Is there any suggestion in the use of the word "honest" that the criticisms are only considered dishonest because this government does not like them?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I am sure if the right hon. member will check *Hansard*, he will see that I referred the word "honesty" to the accounting procedures of the government. I said that was the function of the Auditor General. One of his functions was to check into the honesty of government accounting. As far as I know he has no reproach to make on that score.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, does the Prime Minister consider that an independent officer of the prestige and position of the Auditor General should never criticize the almighty goodness of this government?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Annapolis Valley has a supplementary question and then perhaps we can go on to another subject.

Mr. J. P. Nowlan (Annapolis Valley): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct my question to the Minister without Portfolio in charge of Information Canada. In view of the remarks he made over the weekend in Toronto—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Is this a supplementary question?

Mr. Nowlan: Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is very much a supplementary question. In view of the remarks the minister made that Information Canada would open further the doors and windows of government, would the Minister without Portfolio check with the Presi-

dent of the Treasury Board and talk to his colleagues so that they do not close the door on the Auditor General?

Hon. Robert Stanbury (Minister without Portfolio): Glad to, Mr. Speaker.

BASIS OF GOVERNMENT CRITICISMS

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a supplementary question to the Prime Minister. Is the government's contention that the Auditor General has invaded the field of government policy based on the Auditor General's criticism of the government for paying out over \$180 million to the automobile companies by Order in Council because these companies could not comply with motor vehicle tariff order No. 1965? Is this the basis of the government's criticism? Does the government consider this to be an invasion of government policy?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think that this is an area of government policy. It may be that government policy is not right or is not effective or appropriate, in which case we hope that we will be criticized roundly by the opposition. But it seems to me that this is an example where there is a criticism of policy and not of honesty or procedure.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have some serious doubts whether we are not now entering the field of detailed debate on this important matter. I hope that hon. members will not suggest that we should, at this time during the question period, go into a detailed study of the Auditor General's report.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me this is a very important point and the government ought to explain its position. I would ask the Prime Minister if I understood him correctly to suggest that the Auditor General is acting improperly in criticizing the government for spending money without any statutory authority by Parliament?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a supplementary question to the Prime Minister. Does the Prime Minister not agree that the functions of the Auditor General are those set out