

Financial Administration

funds. We intend to call before that committee the Auditor General, the comptroller general, the various deputy ministers and, I suppose, the heads of some of those crown corporations who are for the first time going to be brought under direct parliamentary control. I can tell the leader of the opposition that it is a matter of real regret to our department that these public accounts of the year are not in the hands of all hon. members.

But there again, getting back to our committee of two years ago, the Auditor General himself was the one who pointed out how difficult it is, when there is a fall session, to live within the terms of the present act, which says it shall be filed by October 31, or fifteen days after the session following that. Well, when we have a spring session, starting late in January or in February, it means that the king's printer has two, or perhaps three, months more than he has at the present time for that preparation. I would point out the strain which it has placed on the staff of both the comptroller general and the Auditor General. Our fiscal year ends on March 31. The accounts are not closed until the end of the following month; therefore the staff of the comptroller general can only start their work as far as an overall review is concerned, such as is contained in the public accounts, on May 1. The Auditor General's work, of course, comes after that. The staffs of both the comptroller general and the Auditor General are under great pressure to produce this report on the date set out in the present act. That is why in this new legislation we have the change recommended by the Auditor General to say that it shall be December 31, and not October 31, that such a report shall be tabled.

I can assure the hon. member that it will certainly be in the hands of hon. members by December 31. I know the Secretary of State is listening to this debate and I am sure he will take steps to advise the king's printer it is desirable that this report be in the hands of hon. members as soon as possible.

Mr. Drew: I realize the immense amount of work that is involved in the preparation of this report, and I recognize also the very great importance of complete accuracy in the subsequent amendments made. I was interested in the statement of the parliamentary assistant that there is in pamphlet form the information contained in the separate report at the end by the Auditor General. If these are available I would strongly urge the Secretary of State to have them distributed

[Mr. Sinclair.]

immediately, because I understand hon. members have not received the separate pamphlet. I fully recognize that there will not be an opportunity for the committee which will be considering this bill to consider the items of the accounts in detail, but what I have in mind are the separate recommendations by the Auditor General which the parliamentary assistant has said are in pamphlet form. They would be very helpful as showing any amendments which may be made in this extremely important measure to strengthen and carry out the recommendations that have been made, and which in this case will perhaps be the most recent recommendations that have been made. It would be helpful if they were available to this house at the time this particular bill is under consideration. I leave it on that basis, but I do feel that no matter how long it may take to complete the printing and binding of this full record of the public accounts and the recommendations of the Auditor General, the recommendations of the Auditor General in pamphlet form, which it has been said are now available, should be distributed to hon. members just as soon as possible.

Mr. Sinclair: I did not say that they were available. It is my recollection that on the evening I tabled this report the gentlemen of the press did not all use this one copy to make their statements.

Mr. Drew: That is not only my impression, but my knowledge.

Mr. Sinclair: That is my impression, and certainly we should be able to turn out fairly quickly just a separate copy of the Auditor General's report. It is really not the responsibility of the Department of Finance. The Auditor General, after all, is a servant of parliament, not of the Department of Finance. I hope it will be possible to have that circulated amongst the members of the committee as quickly as possible.

Mr. Hansell: I notice in the resolution that the bill will provide for the appointment, salary and functions of the Auditor General. Is it contemplated that his functions will change from what they are now?

Mr. Sinclair: The bill which was given first reading last session to enable it to be in the hands of members of parliament, and the bill which we shall give first reading after this resolution is accepted, are almost identical, with the exception of a few changes in phraseology which I shall mention on