

ment has ordered an RCMP investigation into who leaked this document. If it is not a Cabinet document, and none of you will stand up in this House and show some gumption and admit this document has reached the point it has in going to Cabinet Ministers, why have you ordered an investigation into it?

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I do not know how many times you have to repeat something for the NDP. Obviously you have to repeat it for one or two days consecutively.

Mr. Broadbent: Tell the truth once.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: The fact of the matter is that if there is any document which comes into unauthorized hands, there is a routine procedure—and this has been repeated by the Deputy Prime Minister—under which the RCMP make an investigation. I am sure the NDP would approve of that; in any province where they have been in power they want to make sure that Cabinet confidences are kept within the Cabinet and no place else.

Mr. Broadbent: So it is a Cabinet document? Thank you very much.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I just said it was routine procedure.

* * *

THE AUDITOR GENERAL

HIRING OF FORMER MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Miss Aideen Nicholson (Trinity): Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Andre: Don't let the truth get in the way of a good issue, Ed.

Mr. Broadbent: Do another poll on that one.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Wednesday came late this week.

Miss Nicholson (Trinity): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Right Hon. Prime Minister. He will know that the office of the Auditor General is conducting a joint study with the United States General Accounting Office to identify needs of users of federal government financial information. The international advisory group includes the Comptroller General of the U.S., the president of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, and many distinguished academics and public servants. As part of this study two former Members of Parliament, a lawyer and an economist, were hired to help interview present Members of Parliament on their informational needs. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance has been quoted using the term "Gestapo tactics" to describe the project. Will the Prime Minister assure the House that the Parliamentary Secretary's total misunderstanding of the project is unique to that Member and not to be taken as a

Oral Questions

reflection of government policy or as discouragement of this very important initiative?

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, this matter arose yesterday through the Hon. Member for Drummond who asked me to inquire of the Auditor General with respect to the rationale of the Auditor General's position which, as the Hon. Member will know, should not only be independent and accountable to Parliament, but should be perceived as being totally independent from partisan participation by active politicians of any political stripe. I have spoken with the Auditor General and he has indicated that Mr. Deniger had already decided it would be appropriate for him to resign his position.

All I am saying is that I am discussing this matter with the Auditor General who agrees with me that there should be no suggestion of partisanship in the performance of his duties. He is an officer of the House of Commons.

SUMMARY FINANCIAL REPORTS

Miss Aideen Nicholson (Trinity): Mr. Speaker, I find that answer astonishing in view of the fact that a very well respected former Leader of the Opposition in this House, Mr. Robert Stanfield, is a consultant to that project, as is Mr. Huntington, a former Conservative Member of Parliament and chairman of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, and co-author of the Huntington-Lachance report on accountability.

If we are ever going to get what we want in the summary financial reports, and bear in mind this project particularly gears into the summary financial reports, if we are going to get the kind of information which assists parliamentarians to do their job of looking at government reports, surely former Members of Parliament are the obvious people to be involved, and I am delighted to see Mr. Stanfield and Mr. Huntington involved. But surely the Minister is not saying that only Conservative Members have anything to contribute to this House?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, my understanding is quite simply that, with respect to advice the Auditor General received concerning this project, he may have consulted a variety of people on a non-paid basis. Mr. Stanfield and Mr. Huntington were simply consulted, they were not paid \$80 or \$90 an hour as consultants.

The question is, I suppose, whether or not the Auditor General, who, I know as an officer of the House wants to be completely apart from any suggestion of partisanship—the whole question is whether or not with these people, who are former Liberal Members of Parliament, still active in the Liberal Party, there is a perception that they are paid consultants to the Auditor General, an officer of the House, and whether this is appropriate. The Auditor General is giving that matter consideration, and I expect he will reply to the appropriate committee.