

ly do not believe it intends to exclude the entire dairy sector from Article 11 coverage.

We firmly believe that our supply management programs conform with international regulations as we understood them. We have played by the rules and we expect our trading partners to do the same.

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to further elaborate on a question that I asked of the President of the Treasury Board on October 26, 1989.

The subject of my two questions that day dealt with the government's refusal of a request for access to information by the Auditor General. Specifically, in this particular case, with releasing logs for the use of VIP aircraft by ministers of the Crown.

Now, as everybody knows, on October 24 of this year, the Auditor General released his report for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1989. In chapter 6 of that report, the Auditor General indicated that he had been denied access to certain files regarding ministerial expense claims and also regarding the government's use of VIP aircraft.

Now, on first blush, the documents that were requested by the Auditor General concerning the use of VIP aircraft seemed to be something that a government should have given as a matter of course. What he wanted to know was what was the stated intention of the trips that the ministers had taken on government VIP aircraft. He wanted to know that for the simple reason that he was trying to do his job. He was trying to find out whether or not the charges that had been sent to the minister or the department from National Defence were the proper charges. That is because there are three different classifications of flights.

The previous day, I believe it was, in response to a question from another member, the minister indicated that he had put the issue over to the comptroller general who would conduct an investigation and, yes, the information that was requested would be made available to Parliament, to members and to the public.

As reported at page 5051 of *Hansard* on October 24, the President of the Treasury Board said:

Adjournment Debate

—we will provide on a regular basis the total travel expenses of each minister, the number of times he takes an aircraft, where he is going, who he is going with, his itinerary, the reason for the use of the aircraft and the cost of the government aircraft.

The day before, the minister seemed to respond that the information which the Auditor General requested would be made available. That simply is not the case. I have been in touch with the Auditor General and I have carefully read the responses from the President of the Treasury Board to previous questions. The minister responsible for the Treasury Board basically said that all information from that date forward would be made available. The Auditor General had requested specific information from the period of April 1, 1989 onward, not October 24, 1989 onward. The question that I had asked was would the minister responsible for the Treasury Board—yes or no—specifically give the information that had been requested by the Auditor General. The minister's answers did nothing to allay the concerns or the questions that were posed by myself and some of my other colleagues. Consequently, on November 9, Mr. Paul Tellier, Clerk of the Privy Council, commented at a committee meeting in response to a question from one of the members of the Public Accounts Committee. I wish to quote from an article that appeared in the *Globe and Mail* for November 10, 1989:

When Mr. Tellier was asked yesterday whether Mr. Dye would be allowed to audit ministerial travel, he told the committee: "That audit is not going to take place."

You can see why I am a little confused, you can see why I am concerned, you can see why I am looking for additional information, Mr. Speaker.

We have also been told by the President of the Treasury Board that that information could not be made available dealing with receipts and other matters requested by the Auditor General to do his audit because he said, and I quote from page 5086 of *Hansard* for October 25:

I think that Opposition Members can well understand that in such cases, it is important to maintain confidentiality. It is government business.

I think that is an absolutely incredible statement for a minister of the Crown to make. The Auditor General is an officer of this place. In the conduct of his duties when he audits various government departments and agencies the information that he is given is confidential. Surely to goodness this government is not questioning the trustworthiness of the Auditor General, a man whose job and that of his department is to ensure that the public interest is being upheld by members of Parliament, by