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their official duties and responsibilities, the conflict shall be resolved in favour of the public interest. They shall not solicit or accept transfers of economic benefit, other than incidental gifts, customary hospitality, or other benefits of nominal value, unless the transfer is pursuant to an enforceable contract or property right of theirs. They shall not step out of their official roles to assist private entities or persons in their dealings with the government where this would result in preferential treatment to any person. They shall not knowingly take advantage of, or benefit from, information that is obtained in the course of their official duties and responsibilities and that is not generally available to the public. Public office holders shall not directly or indirectly use, or allow the use of, government property of any kind, including property leased to the government, for anything other than officially approved activities; and they shall not act, after they leave public office, in such a manner as to take improper advantage of their previous office”.

• (1930)

These are the nine principles of the *Conflict of Interest and Post-Employment Code for Public Office Holders*. In contrast with the motion of my friend, which is neither clear nor strict, this is something which is extremely clear and extremely strict. All parliamentarians are subject to this code and must submit a report annually to the Office of the Registrar to make sure that we abide by the nine principles while performing our duties.

I think we also forgot that during these last few months, all three political parties have been working very hard. It is strange how much difference there is between what is said in committee and what is said in the House. We worked hard to clarify what constitutes a conflict of interest and to try and propose something which would be in keeping with the desire of parliamentarians to give a better image of the situation. The conflict of interest committee even thought that spouses and children of parliamentarians should be subject to full public disclosure. Everybody would have the right to see what they own.

We received a representation, as my colleague for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell will recall, from the Parliamentary Spouses Association and they were fairly divided on this matter, quite divided, as a matter of fact. We were told, and that is what I was getting at, that even if we imposed stricter rules and set penalties more severe than the ones already provided under section 122 of the Criminal Code in cases of fraud, if the individual's perception of our position did not change, we would have solved nothing. In this respect, I very sincerely think as a government member and as a member who simply likes his job, that in the last few years, and I do not want to make a value judgment, there has been a tendency to lead people to believe that there was favouritism going on and that it was a crime.

Some individuals who worked on some issues rather than on others were suspected of being dishonest. In the last few years there have been attempts at introducing the notion of criminal wrongdoings in what might only have been a conflict of interest, with all that it implies under the conflict of interest guidelines. A conflict of interest is not a criminal act, depending on its nature. Obviously I would never support defending a member of this House or a parliamentarian who would have received money for his own benefit for services rendered. The legislation is clear about this, I do not have to defend this point. It is mentioned in the Parliament of Canada Act, the Canada Elections Act and the Criminal Code.

We are governed by many laws and, contrary to what some might think, that we have no rules and are above all laws, I will repeat, because I did not name all of them before. We must abide by the Standing Orders of the House of Commons, the Criminal Code, the Parliament of Canada Act, the rules of the Senate and the Canada Elections Act. All those laws dictate our conduct.

Over the years for partisan reasons I would say those motives could turn against us eventually. We let Canadians believe that conflict of interest was a criminal act. There is no solution until we implement a system or until we reach an agreement concerning our own conduct. Of course we have immunity on both sides of this House, so I am not judging one party more than the other. Everyone is aware that some of the things we hear could not be said outside the House, as we have seen in the past.