

community, and a strict respect for the arm's length relationship between government and that agency.

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YOUTH

EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS' GUIDELINES

Mr. George Baker (Gander-Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask the Minister of State for Youth (Mrs. Champagne) to intervene on behalf of the young people who are being discriminated against in the hiring guidelines for federal works programs released yesterday by the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Miss MacDonald).

The Minister of Employment said that we have the highest number of young people in our history without work, and that this is a short-term make work measure on their behalf. I would ask the Minister responsible for youth to examine these guidelines. She will find that preferential hiring is given to unemployment insurance exhausters, then to those drawing social assistance, and then to those who are drawing unemployment insurance. It means that a young person who has not worked before and who is not on social assistance is not allowed to go to work in any of these federal works programs called Canada Works or Section 38.

I am asking the Minister of Youth to intervene, and do whatever she must, to get the Minister of Employment to drop these discriminatory hiring regulations that discriminate against all of our young people in this country who are out of work.

● (1115)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

ALLEGATIONS CONCERNING MINISTER

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Right Hon. Prime Minister.

According to a story published in the press today, the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion owns a company; he has a 50 per cent interest in a company that manufactures shoes, and since he is responsible for the Anti-dumping Tribunal and for setting quotas on footwear, and the president of the company said that the company was having problems because of imports. Did the Right Hon. Prime Minister take the necessary precautions when appointing the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce or the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion by asking him certain pertinent questions, and did the Minister inform the Prime Minister of the potential conflict of interest that existed at the time, and if the

Oral Questions

Prime Minister was aware of the situation, how could the Member in question become the Minister of a department where he must make daily decisions that may affect the financial position of a company in which he has a 50 per cent interest?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): I am disappointed and surprised at the Hon. Member for asking such a question. However, I can assure him that all legal requirements were met before anyone was appointed, including the Minister in question. The Hon. Member is no doubt aware that from time to time, Canadian citizens, including Members of this House who have worked in the business world, have been faced with certain problems, and I must say I have received every assurance that all legal requirements have been met, and I am confident that the Hon. Member in question has the integrity and competence required to perform his duties as Minister.

[English]

RESPONSIBILITY QUERY

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to ask the question because it is a very important problem. It is not the integrity of a person, I do not put that in question, but a Prime Minister has an obligation that, when he appoints a Minister, he must make sure there is no conflict of interest and no appearance of conflict of interest.

How is it that since September 17 one person in this House, being the owner of a shoe factory, becomes a Minister and remains a Minister until the end of October, owning shares of a company and having the responsibility during that time to make decisions that can affect quotas and the future of this company?

I think the Prime Minister had a duty to make sure when he appointed that Member of Parliament that there was no conflict of interest. He could have appointed him to a different portfolio but not to a portfolio in which he makes decisions about a business in which he has a personal interest, a very important interest because he owned 50 per cent of that company.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member seems to presume bad faith and dark motives on behalf of the Minister.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Deans: No, that is a different matter.

An Hon. Member: If the shoe fits, wear it.

Mr. Mulroney: I can assure the Hon. Member that all of the provisions of the statutes governing conflict of interest were discussed with the various Ministers by me, and they were all fulfilled to the letter within the time frames stipulated to ensure precisely that there would be no conflict of interest.