

One might say that somebody else might have made that judgment. Well, it has been going on for years and no one did. I happen to think that if you select someone you know and trust and who has experience, you are likely to get good value. That is the basis I would use for selecting a lawyer, if I needed one, or an accountant. That is the basis we used for selecting this advertising agency. We got good value. We saved \$500,000 a year for the taxpayers because they brought this to our attention based on their expertise and knowledge. We have a trust relationship. They are an honourable firm, which we knew, and that is why we hired them.

Mr. Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Andre). Yesterday, in response to a question by the Member for York South-Weston (Mr. Nunziata), he mentioned that there are some 350,000 contracts a year that go through his office. That works out to approximately 1,700 every working day. He further elaborated that only the contracts in excess of \$1 million go to his desk while the rest are obviously handled through the normal channels. Could he elaborate on how many were and were not tendered and how many were over \$1 million?

● (1410)

Let me also ask a hypothetical question. If the Minister were to investigate the brother-in-law of every Member in the House, for instance, how many people would he have to investigate with 350,000 contracts a year?

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, the figure of 350,000 is about right. Less than a thousand of those contracts would actually come to my desk. Those are contracts that are above \$1 million. Those contracts between \$250,000 and \$1 million are under the authority of my officials at the director general level and officials who work for the director generals are responsible for contracts below \$250,000.

Obviously, we cannot investigate the familial relationship of people we do business with in the way suggested by the Opposition. It is impossible. For instance, we frequently buy typewriters and computers from IBM. It would be absurd to ask IBM, with its thousands of employees, if any of its employees are related to someone who has something to do with the Government. That cannot be done.

If the Opposition are really worried about impropriety, they should be concerned about all of these civil servants, director generals and so on, who have relatives, both blood and by marriage, and who have my delegated authority.

The way we try to avoid misuse is as I have explained it. Every week a magazine is published with those contracts that have been let by my Department. We depend on a vigilant opposition and a vigilant media to point out that someone's uncle may have received a contract. We will look at it to see if there is value for money.

I repeat that the mandate of my Department and the mandate I accept wholeheartedly and will not abandon, no matter how much I am pushed by the NDP, is a mandate of

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value for money. In this contract we got extraordinary value for money.

Mr. Deans: Mr. Speaker, I simply want to say to the Minister that I agree with him 100 per cent. One of his responsibilities, perhaps his primary responsibility, is to ensure that we get value for money. There has not been any attempt made by me or anyone in this Party to suggest that we did not get value for money. We have no intimate knowledge of whether or not we did.

I am prepared to concede that it may well be true that we got the value. That is not the issue that we are trying to address. We are trying to address the whole question of the appearance of preferential treatment. I thought I made it quite clear, and no matter how often the Minister says it I am sure he knows that no one is suggesting that just because someone works for some company it automatically excludes the company from Government work. We are saying in essence that where principals of a company stand to benefit directly from the contract—not indirectly benefit through wages—that contract should only be given as a result of a tendering process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): The period for questions and comments is now over. Resuming debate.

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (Saint-Henri-Westmount): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that my hon. friend, the Deputy Prime Minister, (Mr. Nielsen) was here today. I rise to speak to this motion in order to review objectively the remarkable series of events which have transpired in this dossier, particularly in the office of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson).

These events apparently began shortly after the Government assumed office in September, 1984. I would like to emphasize at the outset that my interest in rising to talk to this motion is not in any way to question the integrity of the Minister of Finance, as I indicated earlier in the House. My concern is with the judgment of the Minister in the circumstances that have been described and with the competence of the Department, the Minister and the administration.

I would like to underline the disarray into which the public administration is falling if this is indeed to be a precedent of management in offices of various Ministers. I suggest that we cannot ask Canadians to accept a Government that plays fast and loose with systems which have been established and with guidelines and practices that are well known. Those guidelines and practices are not meant to protect the integrity of the Minister but the integrity of the entire system and the Government itself.

I did not rise to talk about patronage *per se*. We know the view of the Government with respect to patronage. We have learned that there is no public trough wide enough or deep enough to satisfy the aspirations of all the living, breathing Tories who are to participate during the period of the Government. Favouring members of the families of Cabinet Ministers might be challenged as discriminatory by some of the Tories on the back-benches, but I will leave that to them to address.