

*Supply*

How could any of us, or in fact any citizen of Canada, have these matters addressed? The only way for them is to write to the Prime Minister and say they think it is wrong. If the Prime Minister replies that he has considered the matter and does not agree with them, that is the end of it under the present system. Do Members on the Government side understand that this is not a question of partisanship, a question of the Liberal Party versus the Conservative Party or New Democratic Party?

Circumstances change. Indeed, it is my expectation, based on the very sound advice I get from the people of Canada, that after the next election, the Conservatives will be sitting on the Government side and the Liberals will be sitting here. That does not make the argument any less relevant. In fact, it is more relevant. We should be accountable. The highest standards should apply to any Government in which I serve. I say that regardless of which side of the House we are on.

There are other examples of cases that have arisen with respect to former office holders in particular. I will not name them. Quite apart from the situation that we have, there is some serious question about the activities of current office holders.

It is time to look at where we are going in terms of morality in Government, the question of whether a Government can, with impunity, reward its friends through a system of turning the other cheek when former office holders come back to deal with their former Departments. That time has long since passed. The people of Canada will not tolerate that kind of activity. They want Parliament to address this matter. There are no names attached to this motion. It allows the committee to deal with the matter in a very dispassionate way in order to see exactly what steps should be taken.

There have been other examples of committees of this House which have worked very well. The Select Committee on Procedure and Organization is doing an excellent job. It is now attempting to bring our rules up to date to suit these modern times. It is acting as a group, considering what should be done, and making representations and recommendations to the House. The same can be said for the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections. This motion would allow that Committee to see what we should be doing in terms of conflict of interest. Indeed, it would be following a fine tradition.

Some ten years ago we had the consent of the whole House to refer this same said subject matter to the Committee. The Parliamentary Secretary who spoke before me was in the House at that time and his name is recorded in the vote on that issue. We did not hear him stand up at that time to say to Mr. Sharp, the then Government House Leader, that he did not agree with him because he thought it was a shoddy business and might affect the reputation of some members of Cabinet. At that time he said "ready, aye, ready", as did all Liberals. He did not say anything in the House.

I do not understand why Government Members who have supported the concept of more power for individual Members of Parliament do not take advantage of the offer now being made available to them. It would make this House, both Members and Cabinet Ministers, more accountable for their

actions. They could speak independently rather than under the threat of the Government whip. They have the suggestion of the House Leader of the NDP who said he was prepared to move with unanimous consent to have this matter regarded as a non-confidence motion.

● (1700)

I would like simply to deal with a couple of aspects with respect to the background of this matter in order to make abundantly clear what has transpired in the history of this matter, so there can be no misunderstanding as to where we are today in terms of parliamentary history in Canada. Hon. Members will remember that on July 17, 1973, a statement was made by the President of the Privy Council, the present Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs, with respect to conflict of interest of Members of Parliament when he tabled a Green Paper entitled, "Members of Parliament and Conflict of Interest". On July 18, 1973, the Prime Minister made a statement regarding conflict of interest in relation to Cabinet Ministers, at which time he urged the House to consider this matter through reference to committee, indicating his intention to bring forward conflict of interest guidelines at that time with respect to Cabinet Ministers. On December 18, 1973, the Prime Minister made a further statement on guidelines for public servants and Order in Council appointees. On December 9, 1974, the then President of the Privy Council, the Hon. Mitchell Sharp, had an agreement with the Opposition House Leaders, through a proposed special order, relating to the allotted day of December 10, 1974, on conflict of interest. The proposal received unanimous consent of the House. That motion, Mr. Speaker, was identical, couched in absolutely identical terms, to the one we are now debating today. So that December 10, 1974, was the allotted day under Standing Order 58(10), when the Green Paper was referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, and the Committee was asked to make recommendations with respect to Ministers and conflict of interest and public servants and conflict of interest. The wording is identical. The motion was adopted by all Parties of the House.

On June 10, 1975, the Chairman of the Committee on Privileges and Elections, Mr. Speaker, yourself, that is to say the present occupant of the Chair, presented a fifth report to the House of Commons endorsing the principles set forth in the Green Paper and recommending the proposal, subject to amendments in the fifth report.

The committee sat from February 20, 1975 to June 4, 1975. In July, 1976 the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee made a report to that body. On June 26, 1978, Bill C-62 was introduced in the House and given first reading. On October 16, 1978, Bill C-6, the Independence of Parliament and Conflict of Interest of Senators and Members of the House of Commons Act, was introduced at first reading. It was the revised Bill C-62. On March 8, 1979, Bill C-6 received second reading.