

Oral Questions

When the Hon. Member talks about the Prime Minister and his responsibility with regards to ethics and morality, I think the answer is very clear. He has acted decisively on many occasions where there has been inappropriate conduct. Conflict of interest legislation has been brought before the House. We have dealt with lobbyists legislation. We have brought in reform with regard to the appointment process, reform with regard to the appointment of judges. There have been reforms in the contracting process. We are trying to get changes to the Elections Act. This is the first Government that has had to operate under the full supervision of the Access to Information Act, so indeed there have been many, many improvements.

The fact of the matter is that what is evident today is that the system has improved considerably over what it was in previous years.

[Translation]

ALLEGATIONS REPORTED IN MEDIA—GOVERNMENT MEASURES

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I would like to remind the Deputy Prime Minister that he did not answer my question. I would like to put it to him a second time: When was the first time the Prime Minister heard of the allegations made by the Hon. Member for LaSalle, as reported in the media on the weekend? Did the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister know about these allegations before the weekend? If so, what specific action did the Government take and when?

[English]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I was certainly not aware of it. My first information with reference to what the Hon. Member said was that which was included in the report in *The Globe and Mail* this morning. I will check with the Prime Minister to make sure, but I am not aware of his being advised of this. I would suspect that would not be the case. I am sure he got his information the same way I did.

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CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

FUNDING OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister on the same subject. We have just had reference to another Conservative Member making what could be euphemistically described as perhaps bizarre statements about financing and how it is being handled in the Conservative Party. At the same time on the weekend the Québec wing of the federal Conservatives said that it will go into the election campaign without relying on corporate donations—

Some Hon. Members: NDP and the Unions.

Mr. Broadbent: —and union donations. They would rely only on donations from individuals.

Some 18 months ago the NDP called for federal legislation in this House not once, not twice, but three times. Therefore, why has the Government of Canada not proceeded with this legislation up until now? Will it give us assurances that it will put into place, not simply moral persuasion legislation but effective law, before the next election, for all of Canada?

• (1430)

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, of course this is an important matter which I believe all Hon. Members want to address. Obviously the Quebec caucus has come up with an interesting approach which I think—

Mr. Broadbent: For the next election.

Mr. Mazankowski: The Hon. Member thinks it's a joke.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Hon. Member for Oshawa has asked a question which, of course, is completely within the rules. I ask Hon. Members to respect the Minister's right to reply.

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, I am trying to answer the question as best I can. I know the Hon. Member posed it in a very serious vein. This is an experiment which the Quebec caucus wishes to adopt on a voluntary basis.

With due respect, these are the kinds of things we could have studied had we been able to move Bill C-79 into committee. The Member's spokesman behind him shakes his head in the negative. I realize that the present Bill does not suit all the needs of the New Democratic Party. We acknowledge that. However, we wanted this Bill brought into committee in order that we could study it fully and consider some of the suggestions which have been advanced by the Quebec caucus.

The Hon. Member also suggests that this should be adopted before the next election. The Hon. Member's Party is calling for an election immediately. According to the Chief Electoral Officer, if we were to make these changes by mid-September it would take three to four months for them to be implemented. I ask them to consider that.

As I said on Friday, I think discussions have already started between the Deputy Government House Leader and the Acting House Leader of the New Democratic Party in an attempt to advance this particular piece of legislation.

There is more to it than only the matter of corporate contributions. There is the definition of election expenses, the issue of third party advertising, the extension of voting rights to people abroad, and the structure of the enforcement commission. We had hoped that we would be able to deal with all of these things and are still prepared to do so.