

*Point of Order—Mr. Gray (Windsor West)*

Finance. These questions to Mr. Lalonde were not only allowed by the Speaker but were answered by Mr. Lalonde. Among those asking questions was the then Hon. Member for Don Valley West (Mr. Bosley), and that individual is still in this House as the Hon. Member for Don Valley West.

I respectfully submit to you, Sir—and I now speak to you in your capacity as Speaker of this House—that if it was acceptable to your predecessor that a question asked by the Member from Don Valley West concerning a matter of conflict of interest involving a Minister not in the capacity he held when the questions were addressed but in his preceding capacity was in order, I say that there is now an unassailable precedent.

I say with the utmost respect that you should apply this precedent to questions being posed at this time in this House to the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion involving his compliance with the Prime Minister's conflict of interest guidelines, which the Prime Minister himself said is a matter of individual ministerial responsibility. I ask you to apply this precedent in your undoubted role as the protector of the interests of all sides of this House and, in particular, the Official Opposition.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Speaker:** The Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) on the same point of order.

Order, please. Could I appeal to the House on behalf of the Hon. Member for Don Valley West (Mr. Bosley) who would like to hear the rest of this matter, please.

**Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, I want to join with my colleague in asking that you reconsider over the next days the questions that were posed today and on other days that were put to the Minister to determine whether or not those questions are proper and can be put to the Minister. We are dealing with the Minister's capacity to perform duties assigned to him as a Minister for a particular portfolio. Those questions were directed with regard to whether the Minister is able to perform those duties properly. In addition, certain matters have occurred outside.

I want to suggest, for example, that in looking at the question you take into account a number of matters. To begin with, I ask you to get and read the open letter to Members of Parliament and Senators sent by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) dated September 9, 1985. On page 3 it says:

I wish it to be understood clearly by all Ministers that they have an individual responsibility to prevent conflicts of interest, including those that might arise out of activities of their spouses or dependent children or the dealings in property or investments which are owned or managed, in whole or in part, by their spouses or dependant children.

I also draw to your attention, Sir, in the guidelines themselves at page 3, Item 7 under the heading Principles, which reads:

7. Every public office holder shall conform to the following principles:

(a) Public office holders shall perform their official duties and so arrange their private affairs in such a manner that public confidence and trust in the integrity, objectivity and impartiality of Government are conserved and enhanced—

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** What has that got to do with this?

**Mr. Deans:** I contend that questions with regard to whether or not an individual Minister has lived up to both the requirements within the letter and the requirements within the guidelines can and ought to be addressed to the Minister himself or herself and no other Minister regardless of how competent they may think they are. I contend that the Minister can answer individual questions relating to matters that do touch upon his or her capacity to administer his or her Department properly. In this instance, given that there is a close relationship between events that occurred as a result of an action taken by the spouse of the Minister and the Minister's ability to perform his duties as set down by law, questions with regard to the action of that spouse, as they touch upon the Minister's responsibilities, are appropriate and can be put to the Minister.

**Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (President of the Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker, what we have just witnessed is, I guess, a reflection of the frustration of the Opposition with the ineffectual way in which the Opposition has been making unfair accusations without foundation against a Member of this House.

**An Hon. Member:** Read the newspaper.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Let us simply put this into perspective.

I listened with great care to the Hon. Member for Windsor West (Mr. Gray) when he brought out the so-called precedent concerning the much remembered Coalgate issue. With all deference to my hon. friend, that is a completely different and unrelated set of circumstances. I remember it very clearly. I know that the questions put by people who had something to question about at that time were directed to Mr. Lalonde in his capacity as Minister of Finance. He responded in that capacity with respect to the administration of his Department.

• (1510)

The opposition Members are trying to have it both ways. They are the first to rise in the House if a Minister, who does not have responsibility for departmental concerns, attempts to answer questions, because they allege a person is a reasonable representative, or if a Minister from the Province of Saskatchewan, for example, tries to answer a question with regard to the Province of Quebec. The rules are quite clear, Mr. Speaker. You are following precedents which have been established by Speakers through time immemorial in this place, that is, if a Minister has ministerial responsibility for a Department he can and should respond to questions.

The fact that there is a Code of Conduct for all Ministers does not give any particular responsibility to all Ministers. In this case, the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Nielsen) carries out the responsibility of monitoring the situation on behalf of the