

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, September 1, 1988

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

### MEMBERS OF THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF COMMONS CONFLICT OF INTEREST ACT

#### MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed from Wednesday, August 31, consideration of the motion of Mr. Mulroney that Bill C-114, an Act to provide for greater certainty in the reconciliation of the personal interests and duties of the office of the Members of the Senate and of the House of Commons, to establish a Conflict of Interest Commission and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee.

**Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Secretary of State of Canada):** Madam Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to take part in this debate concerning the adoption of Bill C-114 which deals with conflict of interest. The purpose of this Bill is, basically, to establish a system under which the obligation to observe certain imperative directives on conflict of interest becomes binding by law and which provides for an administrative framework that did not exist under the old system which was a set of basic directives.

I believe that this debate and this legislation are of crucial importance, since the subject matter raises the debate above party considerations. I think we all have a duty to approach this fundamental issue with a sense of co-operation and solidarity, whatever our political stripe. We are dealing here with an essential attribute of democracy. If there is any place at all in Canada where we can talk about democracy seriously, without fear of ridicule, it is within these precincts where we have been sent as the elective representatives of the Canadian people.

When we talk about democracy, we are talking about something that is part of the very essence of our civilization. With democracy a new concept was born, the concept that political leaders had to have and deserve the trust of those elected by the people. The concept is not brand new. Democracy was born in Athens, and it was Pericles who was first faced with a demand for openness and accountability. There is a

rather amusing story that says a great deal about the perennial obligations and problems governments must face.

In the 5th century B.C., Pericles decided to build the Parthenon, and since Athens was very wealthy at the time and had considerable resources and especially a lot of gold, he had instructed Phidias, the famous sculptor and architect, to make a huge statue of Pallas Athena and to cover Athena with a mantle of gold. Since Athens had a lot of gold, this was not a problem. Phidias followed his instructions and covered this huge statue which was 30 feet high with a fairly thick mantle of gold. Subsequently, the opposition parties, since Athens was a democracy, accused Pericles of keeping back part of the gold. They ordered him to show he had not kept any of the gold for himself and had not given any to his mistress, his courtesans, his wife, his friends or his immediate entourage or, I imagine, to those who helped elect him.

But Pericles, who invented democracy, also knew its difficulties and tribulations, and he had the intelligence and cunning to see to it that Athena's gold mantle could be taken apart in pieces. And once the accusation was made, he took apart the gold mantle and had the pieces of gold weighed that corresponded exactly to the weight of the gold given to Phidias.

This is a lesson that we should all have learned from the history of Athens, Madam Speaker. But we know that this question of conflict of interest and public trust is perennial; it goes back to the beginning of democracy. When there is a tyrant or tyranny, no one cares about the trust that should be placed in tyrants. Tyrants rule by terror.

Remember the maxim of Dionysius, the tyrant of Sicily: *oderint dum metuant*, let them hate me, as long as they fear me. He governed by means of terror, as do all the world's tyrants.

But we are in a democracy, and even in Rome, at the beginning of the Republic, Madam Speaker, you will remember that one of the ways for an ambitious young man to go into politics was to accuse a proconsul returning from a distant province in order to force him to account for his management. That is how Cicero, for example, distinguished himself in his fight against Verres, a proconsul of a Roman province who had lined his own pockets and had to make restitution after Cicero, an eager young lawyer and ambitious politician, had convicted him.

We are dealing here with a basic responsibility and we know that the obligation of integrity for elected officials concerns not only the traditional rules of morality and the traditional virtues. Of course, these are constraining, but politicians are