

Supply

been put on the table and have not been challenged by either the Minister or the Government.

When we see these things, we know that the Government has lost its sense of what is right and what is wrong. The average Canadian does not need conflict of interest guidelines to understand this. I was home in my riding of Hamilton East on the weekend and I went to a shopping mall. Someone tapped me on the shoulder and said that he was building an addition to his house. He asked whether I thought he could apply for an interest-free loan through the Minister. The Government, through the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Nielsen) and the Prime Minister, by refusing to denounce categorically the actions of the Minister's family in using his public office to buttress and swell their own private coffers is absolutely, totally, and categorically wrong.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I believe the fundamental question which should be addressed in this House is the following: Why do the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Deputy Prime Minister go on day after day defending the actions of that Minister? Because they do not understand the question of morality in leadership. This does not surprise me, Mr. Speaker, because looking at all those who were behind the doors—

[English]

Let us take a look at the team which was behind the scenes trying to cut the throat of Joe Clark during the leadership race in the Conservative Party.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Copps: We see that the players are the Hon. former Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion, the Hon. Minister of National Revenue (Mr. MacKay), and the former Minister of National Defence.

Some Hon. Members: Where's Chrétien?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please! Order, please.

Some Hon. Members: Look behind you. Where's Chrétien now?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please! Could we be allowed to hear the speech of the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps).

Ms. Copps: The chickens will come home to roost, Mr. Speaker. My mother always taught me that you are judged by the company you keep. We can see that the Prime Minister had to reward those who were behind the scenes during the leadership race when Joe Clark was the Prime Minister of the country and the Leader of the Conservative Party. Those people were Sinc Stevens, Elmer MacKay, and Mr. Coates.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order! Would the Hon. Member refer to those Members by their ridings rather than their names, please.

[Translation]

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, the issue is very simple. Is the Prime Minister here to show the people of this country some sort of morality? Is he here to tell everybody, not just Canadian men and women, that they do not qualify for those free loans which are available to the former Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion? Will the Prime Minister take his responsibilities and provide information to this House, to all the Members and to all the Ministers of the Crown? As honest men and women here in this House, we do not have the possibility nor the right to use our departmental responsibilities for family purposes that are not tied in with the common good.

[English]

That is the question which, unfortunately, the resignation of the Minister does not answer. We have seen quite clearly that the Prime Minister was originally prepared to hide behind the ADRG and is now prepared to hide behind an independent, impartial arbiter. The arbiter is the House of Commons. It is the Parliament of Canada which tells young Canadians that they can aspire to be political leaders and to come into the House of Commons under all political Parties, that they can aspire to politics because it is an honourable profession. Unfortunately, in the last two weeks the Deputy Prime Minister has been aided and abetted by the Prime Minister who was pulling the strings from overseas. He was leading the charge in the attempt to cover up and stonewall on this issue. It was not the Government's sense of morality which forced the resignation of the Minister, but a result of the Opposition sticking to the question and the public becoming wise about the cover-up. It was public opinion that forced the Prime Minister and the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion (Mr. Stevens) to back down.

● (1700)

It is a crying shame that this resignation has nothing to do with the morality of the Government which has, unfortunately, shown itself to be bankrupt of any sense of the meaning of leadership.

An Hon. Member: The Liberal gazelle.

Ms. Copps: The Member says: "The Liberal gazelle". It is a sad day when the parliamentary process has been subverted by Members on the Government side of the House like the Deputy Prime Minister, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion who have no intention of answering to the public for the way in which they have been ripping off the system. It is also a very sad day when the arbiter of the public trust is a Deputy Prime Minister who, himself, is a self-confessed—

Mr. Blenkarn: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I thought I heard the Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) say that the Ministers to whom she was referring were ripping off the system.