

Supply

the Hon. Member will understand that if the Opposition decides, as they have, that this is all they want to talk about, with a general broad brush approach and without laying a charge, then that is a very unfortunate way in which to conduct the affairs of this House. There are ways in which the matter can be dealt with under the rules, and I listed those in my remarks. I hope the Hon. Member will read them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate.

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, while the Government House Leader was speaking I was awaiting the defence the Government was going to make of the alleged conduct of his colleague. I thought that if there was anything one could say to contradict what is on the record, that would have been the time to make it. That would have been the moment to have given us facts we were not aware of, or the facts that would contradict those facts which are so clearly on the public record, facts that virtually every interested Canadian knows. I had expected to hear how the conflict of interest guidelines of the Government could be interpreted to exculpate the Minister, to permit him to do what it is that the record so clearly and without contradiction shows he has done.

● (1230)

Yet, we got nothing in the way of defence from the Government House Leader. Never has a Government stood up with so little to say on its own behalf on such a serious matter. We heard accusations that we in the Opposition are being disorderly, that we in the Opposition are, somehow or other, not using the tools at our disposal to make the claim that the Government's conflict of interest guidelines have been violated.

As the facts came out in the last two weeks, the Government had many, many opportunities to contradict them. An inquiry is being launched today. It may well be that there will be the odd fact brought forward by that inquiry. It may well be that the contradictions which may exist in some people's minds will be clarified. However, the essential facts are there.

When the Government House Leader was in the Opposition he once asked, in speaking about Mr. Trudeau's conflict of interest guidelines: "What does the Government want from us?" He asked if the Government wanted them to have coloured photographs of the Minister with his hand in the till. Events do not happen in such a way as to permit the Opposition to deliver coloured photographs of Ministers with their hands in the till. Nor do they happen in such a way as to allow us to get long, sworn statements of testimony to present to the Government for it to deal with.

Responsible people in Canadian society and responsible journalists have put facts on the record about what this Minister's wife did to try to bail out their troubled business, the York Centre Corporation. Every few days new statements have been made by responsible people. The Government has never chosen to deny these statements. Did the company get a loan from the Hanil Bank, a company which is related to

Hyundai? The Government did not challenge that it did. That is right on the company's books. Did the company get a loan with the help of the president of Magna International from Anton Czapka, a former big shareholder and promoter of that company? The Government did not challenge the truth of that. It is true. Did the Minister's wife ask Trevor Eyton of Brascan, a member of the Canada Development Investment Corporation, to try to help her raise money to bail out the company? There was no challenge of those facts.

If those fundamental statements were not true, the Government surely should have stood up and denied them in the past two weeks. The Government's failure to deny them implicates the Government by its acceptance of them. Those are the facts and the Opposition is entitled to have answers based on those facts. The Government is not entitled to shoot them back in our face and say "bring us coloured photographs" or "bring us sworn affidavits". That is not our function and it would place an impossible burden on the working of Parliament.

What have we been getting from the Government in the way of defence of the behaviour of its Minister? We have gotten the most unbelievable series of cheap shots. The Government has asked whether we believe that women are chattels and whether we do not think that spouses of Ministers should be able to have their own lives. That is one of the cheap shots which was taken to try to deflect attention from the charges against the Minister. We were asked whether we were against investment in Quebec or Cape Breton. Those are the kinds of answers the Government gave when we raised our concerns.

Another defence was that the former Government made the Magna deal. The Government said that it should not be accused of conflict of interest because the former Liberal Government signed the Memorandum of Understanding. I categorize that as another cheap shot, not only because of the good arguments made by my Leader showing that the Memorandum of Agreement did not settle the terms on which the Magna loan would be based but because there was another Memorandum of Agreement signed by the present Government so that it could claim the credit for all of the subsequent arrangements made with Magna. The Government cannot have it both ways, and I consider that to be a cheap shot.

At the end of last week the Government accused the media of conspiring to prevent the actual facts from being known. If there is any responsibility for not bringing out facts in defence of the Government it falls upon the Government. Day after day, instead of bringing out facts in its defence, it has engaged in cheap shots. Another cheap shot taken by the Government House Leader today is that it is up to us to change the rules of conflict of interest, having been given the opportunity to do so. The present rules are sufficient for the purposes of what this Minister has done, which we consider to be a conflict of interest. The rules are clear and would work, but only if the Government would make them work. We cannot make them work, but I would like to explain how we tried.

Our House Leader asked in the House if, under the rules, we could call witnesses to the Bar of the House of Commons to