

has been the policy of the present government and that of my predecessor for several years . . . The rules . . . will be put in the form of precise guidelines just as soon as parliament has had an opportunity to consider the green paper with regard to members of parliament and senators and the legislation that might be made applicable to them. It is quite possible that the general views of parliament on matters of principle and the specific provisions that are judged necessary or desirable for parliamentarians should influence the final formulation of the guidelines.

For example, there has been some questioning in the House about the guidelines as they relate to the spouses of cabinet ministers. Quite a number of questions have come from the other side. There was one today. The conflict of interest guidelines applying to the prime minister and to ministers of the Crown apply to them in all of their financial dealings. They are expected to include any transactions with or transfers to their spouses. The prime minister and cabinet ministers are also expected not to divulge any confidential information to their spouses which they might use or appear to use to their personal financial benefit. Ministers are held accountable for any breach of these guidelines or of their spirit, as was mentioned in the statement of July 18, 1973, in which the first step of the government's policy regarding conflict of interest of ministers was announced.

This being the case, and having regard to the fact that a minister and his spouse are two separate human beings, it would be unjust to impose upon the spouses of ministers restrictions which would prevent them from assuming an independent role in the community if they saw fit to do so. Moreover, it is the firm belief of the government that no conflict of interest guidelines, however stringent, can be devised which would not put the onus squarely on the individuals to whom they are applicable.

The government would welcome the views of the standing committee and of parliament on this issue. The government will wish to know how the spouses of ordinary members of parliament are to be regarded where they may have financial interests of their own. Are these interests to be revealed if their spouses are involved in advocacy which would require them to disclose an interest? I put this question just to illustrate that members of parliament will have to face up to exactly the same problems, and I hope they will solve them in the same liberal spirit that we have.

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** No, they do not.

**Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** You don't really believe that.

**Mr. Sharp:** In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I wish to emphasize once again the desire of the government to facilitate the work of the standing committee. I hope it can be said of this parliament that it established for its own membership standards of conduct second to none.

**Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I think it is worth putting on the record at the outset that this debate is taking place today because the official opposition made an opposition day available for that purpose and has shamed the government into making a move. A short time ago I asked the government House leader whether the government was prepared to screw up its courage and put this matter of conflict of

### *Conflict of Interest*

interest before the House and permit debate on the referral resolution on an opposition day. That day is now upon us, and not a moment too soon if one considers everything, aside from its courage, which the government has managed to screw up in the meantime. I regret—

**Mr. Allmand:** Mr. Speaker, could I ask the hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) a question?

**An hon. Member:** He hasn't started yet.

**Mr. Allmand:** The Leader of the Opposition has kindly agreed to answer the question. He has talked about tardiness in bringing forward these conflict of interest rules. I wonder if he could tell the House whether he ever introduced such conflict of interest rules in Nova Scotia when he was premier.

**Mr. Wagner:** Go back to the SIU, Warren.

**Mr. Stanfield:** As far as members of the legislature were concerned, I think the same kind of rules existed as exist here in the House of Commons. Really, the green paper does not propose any specific change of the existing situation. As far as members of the government were concerned, there were no published guidelines but there were clear understandings. I do not think there was ever an instance of a member of the government which I led being accused of involvement in a conflict of interest situation.

● (1540)

**Mr. Allmand:** You did not like that question?

**Mr. Stanfield:** It was a very good question, asking about something that happened ten years ago! The Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand) should bring himself up to date and realize that he has been put in an awkward position. I regret this, because I think he is an honest man and should never have been put into this awkward position. I regret to note that while the House is debating this question, five committees are sitting, preventing members opposite and on my side attending this House. They could not hear what the government House leader said and they will not listen to any pearls of wisdom which I and others may or may not drop in the course of this debate.

[Translation]

Later in the course of my remarks, I intend to submit to you a number of principles enunciated by the right hon. Lester B. Pearson some ten years ago. This will give you a fairly good idea of the inertia the government has demonstrated in this area. Information brought to our attention since the beginning of this session has demonstrated the extreme urgency of concrete measures. This urgency is all the more real since the government must now clear without delay some doubts which have been raised concerning the behaviour of some high government officials.

[English]

That urgency was missing as the minister presented the government's position. Today all we heard from the government House leader was a rehash of rhetoric to do with proposed guidelines. These, in the opinion of my colleagues, in my opinion and in the opinion of all whose opinions are known to me, are sadly inadequate. We also believe that the government is not proceeding in the right