

Supply

National Park and matters before the Treasury Board within two years of the time he was President of the Treasury Board.

We are not dealing with these various matters, but we have put this motion forward on the basis of answers received from the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and other Government Ministers as to the deficiencies in the conflict of interest guidelines. We have asked that the matter be referred to a committee. Now, what can be wrong with that? What can be wrong with a reference to a committee, especially when the Deputy Prime Minister, who has answered questions about the Coalgate matter and conflict of interest guidelines, back on July 17, 1973, said, with reference to conflict of interest legislation:

What I consider to be central to the success of the others is the recommendation that a standing committee of each House be designated and charged with a permanent reference to investigate all questions of conflict of interest, to provide Members on request with advisory opinions and to advise the House on a regular basis of any changes which are needed in the rules governing conflict of interest.

These are not the words of the Opposition, they are the words of the Deputy Prime Minister, who now sits next to the Prime Minister of this country—

Mr. Ouellet: What year?

Mr. Hnatyshyn: This was said in July, 1973.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With all due respect to the Hon. Member, the Chair recognizes that a number of Hon. Members, especially on his own side, are seeking to be recognized.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I will ask a question. It is just that I am amazed that this does not go through without debate.

Why is the Minister now so defensive about a straightforward reference to a committee dealing with the substance of conflict of interest? Is it that the Government has something to hide? Secondly, why does the Minister take a position diametrically opposed to that of the Deputy Prime Minister who supported a permanent reference of conflict of interest matters to a standing committee?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to answer this question from the Hon. Member. It is clear that the Government has absolutely nothing to hide, and if it had not been for this trick of Parliamentary procedure which the Opposition pulled at the very last minute last Friday afternoon, we would not be dealing with this motion which may jeopardize the Government's very existence. This is a motion dealing with conflicts of interest which could bring down the Government when it is put to a vote later today; it is imperative, therefore, that we, on the Government side, should vote against it. We have no choice. We are not quite as naive as Hon. Members opposite when they were in power to propose a vote and insist that such a vote could bring about the Government's demise. We are not going to vote in favour of our own downfall; we are, therefore, unable to accept the terms of the motion as moved with reference of the subject-matter of the motion to a

Parliamentary committee, for it would bring the Government down.

That is the reason why we will vote against this motion. That notwithstanding, when the Hon. Member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn) wants to know why we refuse to do what the Deputy Prime Minister had recommended in 1973, I must say to him that the circumstances now are quite different. In 1973, we had just received the Green Paper which had been tabled in the House on July 17, 1973, and which had to be considered in committee. That was the first time the Government was tabling a Green Paper on the subject, so it was quite in order to refer the subject-matter to a Parliamentary committee, which was done. However, the Hon. Member is trying to create—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order! I am sorry but I have to interrupt the Hon. Minister, for several Hon. Members are anxious to direct questions to him.

[*English*]

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, the Minister says that this motion is an attack on the integrity of Liberal Cabinet Ministers. The motion was first drafted by the former President of the Privy Council, the Liberal Cabinet Minister, Mr. Sharp. Whom was he attacking?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ouellet: I repeat that when the suggestion was made quite a while ago in this House, it involved introducing a Bill following publication of a Green Paper. This was suggested during a first discussion on this subject some time between February and May 1975. A first Bill, Bill C-62, was then introduced in the House of Commons, in June 1978, I believe. During the following session, this same piece of legislation was introduced again as Bill C-6 in October 1978. Obviously, as the Hon. Member has noted in his question, the subject had to be referred to a Committee for consideration, and the Bill was indeed referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections between February and May 1975.

This is why the proposal was justified at the time. At this time, it would not be justified to refer this question to a Committee when those who have spoken, the Leader of the Opposition as well as the Hon. Member for Saskatoon West—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Once again, I am sorry to interrupt the Hon. Minister. When questions are lengthy, answers may also be lengthy. However, the last question was rather brief and I want to recognize the Hon. Member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald).

Miss MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Minister is very sensitive. I doubt that he respects parliamentary traditions, but I may be wrong. He now has an opportunity to prove his good faith by agreeing to refer this motion to the Committee so that the guidelines may be examined. Why is he afraid?