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keep in mind what has been transmitted to me over the course of the last two weeks from individuals living in my riding. We have come down a notch or two in terms of the integrity of this institution. People have lost some belief in their elected officials in the national forum. It is one thing to look at individual Ministers and at a Government, and it is another thing to look at the damage which they have brought upon themselves.

Everyone in the House realizes that the Conservative Party hurt itself in terms of the image it professed to have. However, the more long-term problem is the effect on this institution. Very often we hear individuals saying: "You are there on my behalf to further the Parliament of Canada, not necessarily your Party". It should be noted very well that the losers in this debate are not necessarily the Minister or the Government. The real losers are Canadians because their Parliament, their national institution, the institution which they support through their dollars, certainly came under ridicule, and it came under ridicule needlessly. There could have been integrity, moral leadership and conviction to say no to this issue a long time ago. There has been an inability to rise and take the correct and courageous stand. The issue was allowed to drag on until the Minister tendered his resignation today and we were told that an inquiry was forthcoming. That, too, is food for thought as to whether it should be an inquiry. Let us not lose touch with the real losers. It is not a gain of one political Party as opposed to another. It is not the gain or loss of the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney)—it is obviously the latter—but the losers in this debate have been Canadians through the diminishing value of this institution which we defend to our constituents each and every day.

● (1750)

Mr. Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I recall the time when the Tory Government was elected in September, 1984. Everybody felt there was going to be a change. People hoped the change would be for the better and that we would wipe the slate clean. We got rid of 16 years of Liberal rule. We hoped to embark on a cleaner, leaner Government with a change that is healthy for the system.

The Government has been in power two years and already we have had incidents happening. If Allan MacEachen were sitting over there, would we be at this particular impasse? I ask that in my own mind because I think the matter would have been handled differently from the way it was handled by the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Nielsen).

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I do have a working class riding. I am most concerned about the way young people see politicians in politics. This kind of behaviour is not good. As parliamentarians we have lost because of the shilly-shallying on this matter. It should have been dealt with by making a clean break. That is the way it should have been dealt with.

Mr. Bob Brisco (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, I have, over time, witnessed resignations by Ministers before today, both while in government and in opposition, and I have reflected

upon these circumstances and the events that led to those individual resignations. There is no question or doubt in my mind that we share in some degree the trauma that strikes the Minister involved, the pall of silence that comes over the House, the depth of feelings at the loss, however temporary, of a Minister of the Crown. That sense, that mood, is not infrequently shared by members of the Opposition, for some members of the Opposition remember well similar circumstances when they were in government. Of course, there will be those who feel a sense of elation at the misfortunes of a colleague sitting opposite, and that, sadly, is inevitable.

Today was a different, a sorely different day. Today the opening speech by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Turner) was more suited to some other forum than Parliament, in form, delivery and substance.

The Hon. Member for Vancouver Quadra (Mr. Turner) alleges that an inquiry removes the issue from Parliament. Surely, Mr. Speaker, he would be among the first to express strong views if anyone else were accused without benefit of a hearing.

Surely the Leader of the Opposition before his speech today must have reflected on the spectacle of those who sought to run or leap roughshod over the procedural and democratic process of committees whose references of the business of the committee were well known. Clearly this moment of reflection was set aside and in its place the route to the high road was missed or ignored.

There is, as we know, a Code of Conduct which was put forward by the Prime Minister on September 9, 1985. At that time the Prime Minister wrote to the Leaders of the opposition Parties in order to provide them with an opportunity to comment and make suggestions to improve and extend the code to their satisfaction. As we know, nine months later, in the fullness of their opportunity for pregnant thought, they have failed to deliver a response.

Here is what the Prime Minister said in his letter to the Leader of the Liberal Party and to the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent):

Dear Mr. Turner:

As I believe it is imperative in a democracy that public office holders have the trust and confidence of the people they serve, I will be tabling in the House today a Conflict of Interest and Post-Employment Code for Public Office Holders. I have also written to the Speakers of the House and the Senate proposing that they explore the question of such a regime for servants of their respective Houses. I have no doubt that you will support me in this suggestion.

As well, while the roles of other public office holders and those of parliamentarians are clearly very different, I believe that the establishment of standards of ethical conduct for Members and Senators is long overdue. Given the differences in role, I would not propose the same regime. However, I know that you share my concerns and hope that you and your colleagues will be ready to work with us to explore the options.

You may recall that in 1974 and 1975, a Green Paper entitled Members of Parliament and Conflict of Interest was referred for review to the House and Senate Committees. In 1978 an Independence of Parliament Act was given first reading. Unfortunately the measures introduced in Parliament were never enacted. Even though the process may be a difficult one, I would propose that we