

Oral Questions

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I would not think that the guidelines in this instance would refer to the present Minister of Finance; it would refer to the conduct of former Ministers who have—

Some Hon. Members: No, no!

Mr. Trudeau: If Hon. Members of the Opposition will let me finish—

Mr. Forrestall: You are finished!

An Hon. Member: Dream on.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: I know I will never finish dealing with this bunch of fools over here.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, I take it that calling them a bunch of fools is not unparliamentary. I hear no points of order.

Mr. Crosbie: It is just not true.

An Hon. Member: It is sick.

Madam Speaker: I think we have to make a distinction here. When it is applied to one person in particular it has a different interpretation. I would just remind Hon. Members that this day starts with a "W".

APPLICATION OF GUIDELINES

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the Prime Minister is going to answer that question. Before he does, I would point out that the guidelines I quoted are guidelines for sitting Ministers—Ministers now, Ministers in 1981, and Ministers in 1980.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, it seems to me that the point is whether the transaction was justified and whether it was honourable. If it was, I take it that the Hon. Member has nothing against the Government of Nova Scotia signing this. I take it he has nothing against the former Minister, Mr. Gillespie, signing this, because he is not asking about him.

Mr. Nielsen: Yes I do. There is a guideline covering that, too.

Mr. Trudeau: Therefore, if the people who signed this agreement are honourable, why would the former Minister be dishonourable because he signed an honourable deal?

REQUEST FOR ENFORCEMENT OF GUIDELINES

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I have read to the Prime Minister his own guidelines, verbatim, which in effect prohibit a sitting Minister, as he then was—the Minister of Finance as Minister of Energy—from having any dealings with former office holders which provide

grounds or the appearance of grounds for allegations of improper influence, privileged access or preferential treatment.

The kind of treatment accorded to Mr. Gillespie, where he puts up \$25,000 and gets in exchange almost \$1.9 million, seems to me to fall within the definition of a form of preferential treatment. Is the Prime Minister going to enforce his own guidelines and call for the resignation of the Minister?

● (1425)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Madam Speaker: Order. Is the Leader of the Opposition seeking the floor for another question?

Mr. Nielsen: Same question.

Madam Speaker: No Minister or the Prime Minister is obligated to answer a question. There is nothing the Chair can do about that.

Mr. Nielsen: Madam Speaker, I am sure the Prime Minister does not need anyone to run interference for him. Will he answer the question and enforce his own guidelines with respect to the action of his Minister of Finance, which has obviously been improper?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I just want to point out that the reason I did not answer the question was that, in the first phrasing of it, there was no question. It was when the Hon. Member stood again and asked his question. That is why I did not rise, not because I did not want to answer a non-question. The Hon. Member quoted from the guidelines "provide grounds of suspicion or of favour", whatever the words are.

Mr. Nielsen: Preferential treatment.

Mr. Trudeau: That is the issue. Did the conduct of the Minister provide grounds, or was there any grounds in this particular case or particular reason to feel it was dishonourable? That is the question I raise. If there is no allegation that the Government of Nova Scotia or Mr. Gillespie acted improperly, why would the Minister who signed with him act improperly?

Mr. Nielsen: He acted improperly.

Mr. Trudeau: I should like to know the reason there, Madam Speaker. If we talk about providing grounds of improper conduct, surely we must see what those grounds are and how we test them. It is not in the mind of the Hon. Member or in my mind. It is an objective test whether they are doing something wrong or not. If they are doing something which, as the present Minister of Energy says, even in the opinion of the Conservative Government of Nova Scotia