

Adjournment Debate

instead of being paid a regular salary. I should think that the other two, Van Dusen and MacAdam, also had personal reasons to set up private companies to have their salary.

What I want to ask the Parliamentary Secretary this evening is, first, can he assure the House that those three individuals who work in the PMO come under the code of ethics governing the conduct of holders of public offices with respect to conflicts of interest and, second, can he assure the House that the Government as employer, and particularly the President of the Treasury Board, have indeed made sure that there are no conflicts of interest in those companies?

I would ask the Parliamentary Secretary to make the contracts public and tell us whether those companies have clients other than the employees mentioned, the three individuals. Do they have other clients? Can we find out from the Government whether those three public officials who work in a rather important office, the Prime Minister's Office, are beyond the shadow of a doubt and considered as such in terms of conflicts of interest?

Mr. Speaker, my question is simple: Are they pure, in the clean, and not subject to any conflict?

[English]

Mr. Paul Dick (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I am rather surprised at the Hon. Member bringing up a new aspect to this question about which I had no idea. He wants something tabled. I will have to look into that. It is not normal to table certain matters in the House without all involved parties being in agreement. I certainly will not do that. However, I thank my hon. colleague for raising this question.

• (1840)

First I should like to assure him that the matter at hand has nothing whatever to do with conflict of interest. It is normal to have contracts of this nature. Many individuals work for the Canadian Government on contract. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of people working on contract for the Canadian Government from time to time. These three individuals have been engaged to work for the Government in a perfectly normal way. It is well known in the private sector. Thousands do it. It is accepted by the Department of National Revenue and has been for many years, in fact for decades. These contracts were approved by Treasury Board in the normal way contracts are approved. I assure the Hon. Member that there is no reason for concern.

All persons, including those employed under contract, working in the Office of the Prime Minister have been directed to comply with the conflict of interest guidelines. Full disclosure is required under this Government by all such people. I should point out that this is the first time a Prime Minister has required all people working in his office to comply with the conflict of interest guidelines. This was not so under previous administrations. This covers and includes people on contract.

There is no way to state the case more clearly. They have complied fully with the guidelines administered by the Assistant Deputy Registrar General.

As to the matter of taxes, taxes have always been a private matter between the Department of National Revenue and the individuals involved. Suffice to say, they have been employed in a manner approved by the Department of National Revenue, and the Department is taxing them in the manner in which it has taxed others over past decades. It is extremely common, there is nothing surprising, and the matter has been approved by Treasury Board.

FISHERIES—EXERCISE OF MINISTERIAL DISCRETION—
INSPECTION OF FISH PRODUCTS

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): Mr. Speaker, my question relates to the question I asked in the House today concerning the activities of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Fraser). On April 29, 1985, the Minister overruled his federal fisheries inspectors and permitted a large quantity of tuna, which had previously been determined by his inspectors to be unfit for human consumption, to be distributed in markets in Canada and the United States. It has been deemed that this product could in fact affect the health of Canadians and definitely would affect the nature of a \$2 billion industry in Canada.

Yesterday the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Nielsen) completely supported the actions of the Minister. Today, I guess after examining the thing, the Prime Minister ordered the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to withdraw this. It appears to us that the Minister's use of his discretionary power was completely unwarranted and presented a very serious threat to a very viable Canadian industry. In fact, it caused a health concern in the minds of Canadians. As a result, the Minister should have been dismissed.

We cannot have ministerial discretion used in such an inappropriate way. Never for one moment did the Minister of Fisheries deny doing this. Never for one moment did he indicate that he would not be prepared to do this again. That must be corrected only by the removal of the Minister.

My second point is that the Minister has made three serious errors. He made one with the native people of New Brunswick by launching and assisting in what could only be called very ill-considered raids against those people. Also he was involved in an ill-conceived licensing arrangement in which he overruled officials in his Department on the basis of what can only be construed as political advice. Of course the third was allowing contaminated food unfit for human consumption to be distributed in the market-place, going against his inspectors.

The Prime Minister must consider today that we have a \$2 billion industry, \$1.7 billion of what is known as a top quality product being exported into the world market where we are struggling to get more of a share. There are 100,000 jobs and 1,000 registered processors in this country and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans jeopardized that whole industry.