

Conflict of Interest

[English]

—refers to lavish spending on personals. There was the incident of the Prime Minister and two other former Ministers of the Crown eavesdropping on opposition caucus meetings by the former Deputy Prime Minister of the House of Commons. There was influence peddling, insider land speculation, failing to disclose personal loans, awarding government contracts to friends, patronage. The list goes on and on and on, and any type of defence that the Government intends to provide is totally destroyed when we see the name of the Member from York—Simcoe—which is synonymous with the rip-offs of this Government—continues to stand as a candidate with the blessing of the Prime Minister. He is going to be waving that Conservative banner in the next federal election. There were 14 charges of conflict of interest that were levied, not by the Opposition, not by the Liberal Party, but by a judge appointed by the Prime Minister.

The Canadian public spent over a million dollars. In fact, I think it was in the neighbourhood of \$3 million that was spent in taxpayers' money to examine the situation, and it was not at the request of the Opposition. We sought a parliamentary committee. It was the request of the Member from York-Simcoe to be exonerated. The Prime Minister said that the judge would exonerate him, but the judge did not. He found him guilty on 14 counts of conflict of interest, according to the conflict of interest guidelines which were described by the Prime Minister in 1985 as the strongest guidelines in the western world. He came out in this House—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): On a point of order, the Hon. Member for Edmonton South.

Mr. Edwards: I know that the Hon. Member is trying to score some partisan points, but I would remind her that she strays dangerously close to being in contempt of court. I understand her to have said that charges have been laid and that a party has been found guilty. I think, in the case that she is referring to, that that is not the case at all.

Ms. Copps: What are you talking about? I do not know what case the Member is referring to. I was referring to the findings of the Parker Commission which were tabled in this House. There were 14 counts of conflict of interest found by Judge Parker against the former Minister for the interest-free \$2.1 million loan that his wife received for her company business.

Mr. Edwards: Madam Speaker, the point that I am making is that the Hon. Member should choose her words more carefully. I heard her say "charges" and "guilty". She is leaving a false impression in the minds of Members and the public.

● (1050)

Mr. Nunziata: Madam Speaker, Mr. Justice Parker, a Justice of the Supreme Court of Ontario, after a lengthy and costly royal commission of inquiry, found quite clearly that the

former Minister had breached the conflict of interest guidelines on 14 separate occasions. In effect, he found the Minister guilty of breaching the conflict of interest code. That was the finding of a Justice of the Supreme Court of Ontario. For the Member to suggest that that is not the case is absolute nonsense. He should go back and read the report which ended up costing the taxpayers of Canada millions of dollars because the former Minister was so crooked he could not follow them.

Some Hon. Members: Order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The Hon. Member for Hamilton East.

Ms. Copps: Madam Speaker, to come back to my remarks, I think the ultimate point to be considered is that the Criminal Code does not stop people from robbing banks. Let us examine the history of this Government.

I will accept the fact that the current Member for Lac-Saint-Jean (Mr. Bouchard) may be coming at this with a bit of naivety. I hope he is not as naive as he sounded in his comments. In 1985 I was sitting in this House, as were other Members, when the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) came out with a very thick book. It was covered and wrapped in a lovely blue ribbon. He brandished and flourished it and said: "These are the toughest conflict of interest guidelines in the western world". That was before we saw Minister after Minister after Minister resign under a cloud. The Hon. Member for Lac-Saint-Jean said: "Let's wipe the slate clean. Let's start all over again in a very non-partisan way and bring in conflict of interest guidelines". But we cannot legislate a personal code of ethics.

The current Member for Halifax had a trustee in a so-called blind trust who had twenty-twenty vision. His trustee was found guilty by the Investment Dealers Association of Canada for not operating a blind trust, yet he continued to be his trustee. Is that covered under the conflict of interest legislation that is before us? No, because the Prime Minister ignored the recommendation of the Parker Commission to abolish these so-called blind trusts where people have friends, relatives and other people in so-called arm's length relationships actually acting in the case of the blind trust with twenty-twenty vision. That has not been dealt with in this legislation.

For members of the Government to suggest that somehow the Parker Commission did not exist, that the Hon. Member for York Simcoe (Mr. Stevens) was not found guilty of 14 counts of conflict of interest, and the Prime Minister is not, in fact, endorsing that conduct by welcoming him with open arms as the continuing Conservative candidate in that particular riding makes this whole exercise of conflict of interest guidelines seem to be a sham.

I was talking about the Democratic presidential campaign in the United States. There is a saying drawn from the Greek language, "the fish rots from the head down". It is also very true that in the area of cabinet appointments, let us remember one thing, those people are appointed by the Prime Minister. If