

Given that the Minister's office has now released information that the same Jim MacDonald's company has a speech-writing contract with the Minister's Department until June 30, two weeks after the Liberal leadership convention, how can the Minister reconcile this conflicting information from himself and his office?

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member raises an entirely different question. There are several pre-existing contracts involving a company in which Mr. MacDonald, I believe, has an interest but in which he is not involved in the execution thereof, that are being continued. One of them has been completed. The contract for the Second People's Law Conference was completed before I spoke. But the other one, the speech-writing contract, continues. My hon. friend will appreciate that I have to continue to make departmental addresses during this period. In fact I am making one tomorrow and the Hon. Member for Saskatoon West will be pleased to hear it will be in his region.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: You bombed out yesterday. You can try again.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

MINISTERIAL STAFF GUIDELINES

Mr. Tom McMillan (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the same Minister. On April 11 the Prime Minister told the House that his guidelines dictate that there should be no active involvement of any ministerial staff in a leadership candidate's campaign in any important way "without that staff either resigning or asking for a leave of absence."

In light of those guidelines, how can the Minister justify the fact that his campaign manager, Jim MacDonald, is continuing to draw a salary from the Government and from the Minister's own office, albeit through a company, while serving as the Minister's campaign manager in the leadership contest? How can he justify that fact? On the one hand there are the Prime Minister's guidelines, which are clear enough, and on the other hand, and equally clear, is the fact that the Minister's campaign manager is deriving his income in large part from the Government of Canada and the taxpayers of Canada.

Mr. Taylor: It is the Liberal way.

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, if my hon. friend would wait until he hears the answer to draft his supplementary question, he would not have bothered asking that question. I have already answered it.

Oral Questions

WESTERN GRAIN STABILIZATION ACT

TIMING OF PAY-OUT TO FARMERS

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have been promising the world to the Prairies this last week. In the case of the Western Grain Stabilization payments, their promises come a little short.

My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. The Minister of Agriculture and the Minister responsible for the Wheat Board unveiled some changes to the grain stabilization Bill which the New Democrats had suggested in the 1974-75 session and which the Leader of the Opposition got around to a couple of weeks ago. Of major importance in these changes is the timing of the pay-outs. Will the Minister explain to the House and to the western Canadian grain producer why the pay-outs cannot be made immediately after the passing of the enabling legislation in Parliament?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the pay-outs could possibly be made, if you want to get in trouble with the Auditor General. I said at the press conference in Winnipeg that I would not mind getting in trouble with the Auditor General for that kind of a cause. You could estimate what the pay-out would be. The idea and the reason we were putting it forward would be so that farmers could use this issue as collateral at the bank, to have an advance, or to use it with their suppliers for seed or fertilizer. A maximum pay-out, Mr. Speaker, to anyone would be close to \$6,000, but the average pay-out is about \$2,500 to \$3,000 and the Hon. Member knows that, I am sure.

Mr. Benjamin: Do it now.

Mr. Whelan: This is not going to go as far as a lot of people would like. They would like a lot bigger payment for a lot of farmers who are in dire need this spring perhaps because of bad crops, and that kind of thing.

Yesterday evening I was in Hudson Bay, Saskatchewan. I would say there were about 400 people there, and they were good-natured people, too. They listened. They asked questions. I could not have had a more responsive—

Mr. Speaker: The Minister appears to be straying from the original question. The Hon. Member for Prince Albert has a supplementary question?

PAYMENT OF INTEREST

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, we have noted that the whole \$300 million will come from the pockets of the farmer and not from the Government. However, the Minister stated that the change is due to the possibility of the payments being illegal. Could he not use the present timing that is in the Bill and establish the triggering mechanism retroactively so that the money is paid out December 31, 1983, rather than at the end of this crop year? Alternatively, would the Government pay interest on the money it is withholding from the farmers for this period of time?