

Routine Proceedings

entirety with the complex underlying issues fully assessed. Therefore, I will respond to her question at the appropriate time.

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FIRST NATIONS

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

The wife of the chair of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development has been hired by a federally funded Assembly of First Nations as a media relations officer.

My colleague from the Official Opposition has asked for the chairman's resignation. A spokesperson from the Prime Minister's office is quoted as saying of this arrangement: "This is not a conflict". Does the Prime Minister agree with this statement attributed to his office?

• (1500)

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I am answering the question in my capacity as House leader. I point out to the hon. member that a committee chairman is not a member of the government. Therefore the concerns which underlie the hon. member's question do not apply.

Furthermore, I think we have reached the time in our society when spouses can be considered independent of members of Parliament and have their own careers.

The Speaker: Order. As I mentioned last week in a brief statement which I made, committees really stand on their own. Questions with regard to the specifics of committees should probably be addressed in the committees themselves. If, however, there are questions of a general nature which I feel impact upon the administration of government then by and large I would permit these questions to be in order.

I would urge hon. members, if they have questions with the administration of government in mind as opposed to committees, to put them as such.

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, this is another example of the need for this long awaited ethics counsellor.

Will the Prime Minister agree that the long awaited ethics counsellor would find this arrangement to be a blatant conflict of interest?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the answer given by the House leader is the appropriate one.

In our society a member of Parliament is a member of Parliament and the career of his or her spouse should not be affected by the status of a member of Parliament.

There are some restrictions for cabinet ministers that must be respected, but spouses of members of Parliament have the right to earn a living. They have the capacity to earn a living. This is the fundamental right of equality in our society.

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HANDGUNS

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

On Monday the Minister of Justice met with representatives of Concordia University, the Canadian Safety Council, the Canadian Bar Association, the Ottawa Chief of Police and others who asked for a ban on handguns.

Since handguns are not used for hunting but are very often used for criminal purpose, will the minister propose legislative amendments to implement these proposals? What was his answer to these groups on Monday?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the meeting on Monday. The delegation that came to see me in my office was as described by the hon. member and served to remind me that the vast majority of Canadians want effective gun control in the country.

It is recognized that this is only part of the solution. It is recognized that we have to deal with the smuggling of illegal arms and deal properly with those who use firearms in the commission of offences. At the same time it is important to recognize that guns are used in suicides, over 1,000 each year, and that 3,000 firearms are lost or stolen from the homes of lawful owners each year and then turn up in the hands of criminals who subsequently injure or kill with them.

While respecting the legitimate rights of lawful gun owners in the country, the government is committed toward more effective gun control. We will be responding to concerns such as those expressed on Monday last in my office by those who visited on the occasion described by the hon. member.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1505)

[English]

INCOME TAX ACT

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-241, an act to amend the Income Tax Act (child support payments).

She said: Mr. Speaker, the current tax treatment of child support payments requires custodial parents to pay taxes on the support they receive while non-custodial parents are allowed to fully deduct the amount.