

*Oral Questions*

that is an indication of the tremendous integrity, not only of that firm but of the Minister of Finance and the kinds of people with whom he associates.

Let me say this in the larger sphere of events—and I think it raises questions for all of us—I have asked the Hon. Member for St. John's East to set up a panel which I hope will vet the kinds of important nominations. We are reaching agreement on that. It's an important part of parliamentary reform. But I ask the right hon. gentleman to reflect on this. For example, one of the most distinguished citizenship court judges ever appointed—

**Mr. Nunziata:** That's not the answer.

**Mr. Mulroney:** —is the sister of the Hon. Member for Saint-Denis. Mrs. Keith Davey is also a very distinguished judge.

**Mr. Nunziata:** That's not the issue, Brian.

**Mr. Mulroney:** The right hon. gentleman's sister, one of the most outstanding women in Canada, was appointed to her position by the previous Government. We would like to reappoint her. What this raises is the following question: are people entitled to lives apart from elected politicians? I say they are entitled to live their own lives as men and women, building businesses and developing their lives in Canada. We respect their privacy and their competence, and we plan and intend to do that.

## MR. ROBSON'S SALARY

**Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance and concerns as well the Lawson Robson affair. Who paid Mr. Robson's salary, if it was not the Government of Canada, while he was in the service of the Minister? What was the period of time in which he was involved with the Minister, in his employ, after the election of last September? And did that period of time in any way overlap the period of time at which either the advertising contract was commenced or entered into by the Government of Canada?

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, let me try and answer those three questions. The period during which Mr. Robson was with me was from September 17 to around the end of October, during the time I was establishing my office. During that time I presume he was basically on leave of absence from his firm. I presume that his firm was continuing to pay him, but I don't know that answer. The answer to the third question is that I am advised that the contract was signed between the firm and the Department of Supply and Services at the end of November, November 29, I believe.

[Translation]

## ADVERTISING—GOVERNMENT POSITION

**Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):** I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Was Mr. Robson involved in any way in preparing the advertising requirements of his department including Canada Savings Bonds or rather the requirements for advertising Canada Savings Bonds? If so, how can the Minister, as an administrator of public funds, tolerate this kind of incestuous relationship within his own department?

[English]

**Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Supply and Services):** Mr. Speaker, I will answer since I am the Minister responsible for that contract and it was my Department which selected Lawson Murray, on our own volition, to undertake this contract for the very good reason that it is one of the best financial institution advertising agencies in the country. It represents such clients as Dominion Securities; Pitfield, MacKay, Ross Limited; McLeod, Young, Weir Limited; Wood Gundy and others.

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Andre:** As evidence of the value we received from that very intelligent selection of an advertising agency, I have a letter dated February 15, 1985 in which it outlines ways in which the Government can save several hundred thousand dollars, at least \$400,000 per year, over the practices undertaken by the previous Government. One sentence states: "While I would regret the end of our association and the loss of revenue to Lawson Murray Limited, I do not feel that we would be responsible were we to advise you differently". Any time we can get a contract with a firm which is going to save that kind of money for the taxpayers of Canada, we're going to do it.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

## MINISTER'S CONVERSATION

**Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance as well, and deals again with the Lawson Robson case. The Minister did admit to the media that he did speak with his brother-in-law about the awarding of this untendered contract to his brother-in-law. In that conversation did he talk about the fact that this could be conceived as improper by the people of this nation?

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, we had a discussion subsequent to the awarding of the contract. We discussed the possibility that there could be some questions as to the awarding of the contract, but it is not a clear situation. It is not a clear picture—

**Mr. Broadbent:** You are right.