

Adjournment Debate

have a conflict of interest at that time and the issue before Parliament, a year ago, was whether or not the particular senator did. That issue has still not been answered.

I can suggest that the government is stonewalling when a whole year passes and the issue has not been dealt with. I think the voters of Canada are entitled to look for more, an improved response over that which was given to the electorate and to Parliament that day, a year ago. I think they deserve more than that and I want to point out that my role in opposition is one that requires all of us, on this side of the House, to ask questions like this and ask them fairly.

We do not want to convict anyone *in absentia* but we are certainly entitled to ask fair questions. It is our job. A lot of us actually do not like the job. It is not easy to stir the pot. It is not easy to have to stand up and point the finger and pretend someone else is a bad guy and maybe worse than other people in this world, but we have to do that in opposition. That is our job to ensure that the duly elected government follows a path that the electorate thinks is fair.

When the government strays, as it does from time to time, it is our job to keep the government honest. I often wonder what if I or my colleagues in the opposition were on that side of the House in government? Perhaps that is a possibility over the next few years. It may occur and perhaps it may not. I like to think that it would.

How would I like those questions to be addressed? I know that when I answer a question outside of the House, I like to answer it straight. If I have made a mistake or I am not sure, I would like to think that I would admit that.

• (1900)

On November 6, a year ago, this particular government began stonewalling on a minor issue but an issue involving conflict of parliamentarians. The issue has still not been answered. It has still not been properly addressed in this House or in the Senate, which has its own life, the other place.

I would like to think that some day, some time, some place there will be a minister who will stand in the House and deal with the issue in a very straightforward, honest manner, clear the decks, place the blame where it should

lie, and get on with the more positive business of the country.

Mr. Barry Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, his question is related to the dealings of Senator Cogger with the government and a Crown corporation, namely the Federal Business Development Bank, the FBDB.

The questions that were asked of the minister were answered at that time. He knows full well that there is an RCMP investigation into this case and, if he is a member of the bar, he would know that we cannot comment on this matter. It is under active investigation by the RCMP, an investigation that has repeatedly been reported by the news media over the past year. It is clear that the RCMP is conducting a thorough investigation to ensure that the Canadian public is informed of whether or not there is indeed a conflict of interest in the senator's dealings with the government.

In May, as I am sure the hon. member also knows, the special committee of the Senate created to look into this matter, and which I may add is made up of a majority of Liberal senators, suspended its hearings to await the findings of the RCMP investigation. This is normal.

In June a series of reports in newspapers across the country indicated that the RCMP had filed documents in the Quebec court describing in some detail the results of its investigation to that date. Since then there have been numerous other reports in the media related to the Senator Cogger investigation.

In light of what is obviously a very active, ongoing RCMP investigation, it would be improper for me or any other member to comment any further on the topic until such time as the RCMP has completed its work.

The member's colleague, the hon. member for Glegg—Prescott—Russell, has already requested an incredible amount of information from the FBDB and, far from stonewalling, we have given him all the information he needs on this question of dealings between Senator Cogger and the law firm of Lapointe and Rosenstein. This information has been provided as requested.

In addition, both the bank and the Government of Canada have co-operated as fully as possible in making available not only documents but resource people as well to the RCMP while it carries out its work.