

Supply

I see, Mr. Speaker, from your posture that I am near the end of my time. There are a few things I would like to say. If I have the opportunity to continue, I will do that. If not, I will naturally respond to questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): I thank the Right Hon. Member for noticing the time. I am not sure whether he wants to seek unanimous consent.

Some Hon. Members: Continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): The question before the House is that the Right Hon. Member seeks unanimous consent to continue.

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): There is not unanimous consent.

[*Translation*]

Questions, answers and comments.

The Hon. President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) has the floor.

Mr. Pinard: Earlier, the Leader of the Opposition mentioned that the purpose of his motion was to refer the matter to the Assistant Deputy Registrar General for investigation. Can he tell the House very specifically what leads him to believe that the Assistant Deputy Registrar General should be responsible for investigating such a matter?

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, first, the regulations concerning conflicts of interest designate the Assistant Deputy Registrar General as the authority responsible for examining such matters. If the Government wants to introduce an amendment to give this responsibility to a judge, for instance, or to have a parliamentary investigation, we would be willing to consider it, but this is what the law provides and we want to obey the law. This is the first part of my answer.

The second part concerns the second way in which the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) is trying to elude his responsibility to resign in this situation.

[*English*]

He said that this is all the fault of his officials. That is what the Minister of Finance said. That is a flagrant breach of all the traditions of parliamentary democracy. Let me just remind him of the readings on this matter by J. E. Mallory on "The Structure of Canadian Government". I am sure the House would like to hear about this. It reads:

All official acts of government officials are done on the authority and in the name of the minister. Accordingly any act by an official of the public service, within the scope of his duties, is one for which the minister must assume responsibility.

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I never said what the Hon. Member says I said. I would hope that he would at least be honest.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pinard: I regret that the Leader of the Opposition has tried to kill time to avoid answering questions. My question was simple and to the point. First, under what act can he claim that the Assistant Deputy Registrar General has the authority to carry out the type of enquiries mentioned in his motion? Second, is it not true that his former House Leader, the man who has taken his place as Party Leader in the House, wrote to the Assistant Deputy Registrar General to ask him to launch an enquiry? And third, does he have the courage to tell the House whether he has received a reply from the Assistant Deputy Registrar General stating that he has no authority to make that kind of enquiry, that he answers to the Prime Minister, and that he has definitely no jurisdiction to analyze the guidelines applicable to former Ministers? Does the Leader of the Opposition, the former Leader of the Opposition, have enough courage, to sustain his argument, to substantiate his allegation, to tell us what act he is invoking and whether his Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party did indeed ask the Assistant Deputy Registrar General to make an enquiry? Finally, can he tell us whether he got a reply? Three very simple questions!

[*English*]

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, this Government is really beyond belief. They are now trying to say "Yes, you have caught us, yes our finger is in the cookie jar, but there isn't a judge who can look at it." That is what they are trying to say. Let me answer them. They have admitted guilt. They just say there is nowhere that guilt can be judged. Sooner or later they will have to go before the court of public opinion and have their guilt judged. When that happens they will be thrown off the Treasury benches.

Let me respond precisely to the question put to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard). I quote from a document of his own Government, which reads:

On behalf of the Prime Minister, the Assistant Deputy Registrar General is responsible for implementing the federal Government's policy on conflict of interest, in particular the conflict of interest organization, applies conflict of interest guidelines to Ministers of the Crown, designated Members of their exempt staff and full-time Governor in Council appointees.

• (1550)

That clearly establishes the authority of that official to judge the application and the adherence to the conflict of interest guidelines. It is the Government's own document. It did not pass an Order in Council in this case as it did regarding the uranium cartel. In the case of the uranium cartel where it did not want the facts to be known, it made it illegal to discuss them. It did not do that in this case. It is here, in its own document, that the Assistant Deputy Registrar General is responsible for policing the guidelines. We are saying, let the policemen police; let the judge judge. Stop hiding.