right up against the privileges of Members of Parliament and, more important, of the very people we claim to represent.

• (1540)

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Canadian Wheat Board)): Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. First, as we all know, political Parties in this country are based totally on volunteers. As soon as you imply that somehow a benefit flows to those who volunteer, then you call into question whether people are really volunteering their time.

There is no question, at least in my mind, that the questions asked by the Hon. Member for Vancouver—Kingsway (Mr. Waddell) were put in such a way as to impugn the motives of both the Hon. Minister and the other person involved. That is very unfortunate. As the Hon. Member for Peace River (Mr. Cooper) said, when you bring the name of someone into a discussion and that person has no idea that is going to happen, you automatically preclude that person from having any say in his or her defence. That also is very unfortunate. There is a practice that some of us in this House follow, that is, you never ever raise a person's name in the House without first clearing it with them. Doing that is very useful in protecting the privileges of people outside this House.

Second, as Government gets larger and larger it becomes virtually impossible to carry on activities which are isolated from what goes on in this place. To use myself as an example, I represent an agricultural constituency. Many of the people on the Progressive Conservative association in my riding of Portage—Marquette are farmers. Many of the people on my executive are farmers. Am I supposed to tailor my activities as a member of the Government to what goes on in my constituency so there can be no appearance of conflict of interest? The Government makes many decisions on behalf of farmers. When we set initial payments, is it supposed to be done at a time when there is no fund-raising or other activity going on in our constituencies so there can be no possible appearance of a link between the two? Setting the payment under the Western Grain Stabilization Act is a major event in the spring. Is that supposed to happen at a time when there is no constituency activity in my riding association?

The mere fact that the Hon. Member raised the question in such a way as to imply some kind of unfit conduct calls into question many other government activities. As unfair as it is to the Minister involved, it is also grossly unfair to those volunteers who support political Parties so that the system can function as well as it does. This has implications not only for the Minister but for the way all of us as Members gain support in our constituencies so that we are eventually elected to this place, and for the way Government functions.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. The Hon. Member for Vancouver—Kingsway (Mr. Waddell) said there is no conflict of interest and he is not implying any conflict of interest. However, the thrust of his question was whether I would absent myself from any discussions concerning Dome and Amoco. The question to the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) dealt with whether I participated in any such discussions.

There is only one reason why I would absent myself from any such discussions, and that is, in order not to be in a conflict of interest. The fact that he asked if I would absent myself is, *prima facie*, a suggestion that I am in a conflict of interest and must not participate in those decisions. While he says he makes no accusation of conflict of interest and does not mean to imply it, he asks that I do something which I would only do if I were in a conflict of interest. I humbly suggest that if he wants to be consistent he should withdraw the implied suggestion in his question to the Prime Minister that I must not participate in any discussions concerning Dome and Amoco. To do otherwise is to leave the implication that I am in a conflict of interest.

As a Liberal Member pointed out, the person concerned on my executive has been doing this for two years. He has been on the executive longer than that, but he has been on the fund-raising committee for the last couple of years. He is doing this year what he did last year, that is, his activity on the executive. The Hon. Member for Cape Breton—The Sydneys (Mr. MacLellan) had the decency to talk to him before raising this matter and learned that it has nothing to do with any business transaction. He is simply participating as a volunteer in the same way that he has in the past and, hopefully, will in the future if he has not been totally turned off and soured by this experience.

Mr. Arnold Malone (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, the comments just made by the Hon. Minister cover a good part of the points I wanted to make, so I will be very brief.

What I have to say flows mainly from the comments of the Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville (Mr. Nystrom). Slander is an issue of privilege. Moreover, slander by innuendo is no less slanderous. On hearing the question by the Hon. Member for Vancouver—Kingsway (Mr. Waddell) no reasonable citizen would doubt the intent. He says he did not intend to cast an innuendo. I do not believe him because, as the Hon. Minister indicated, the Hon. Member did not seek facts, an analysis, or any specific information. He rose only to question the propriety of the Minister undertaking certain activities, on the assumption and perhaps even in the hope that something might have been amiss.

I think the only appropriate and proper thing for the Hon. Member to do is, as requested, to withdraw, as the Hon. Liberal Member did, to his great credit.

Mr. MacLellan: Mr. Speaker, I rose earlier because I had some information that the Hon. Member for Vancouver—Kingsway (Mr. Waddell) did not have. I did not mean to insinuate that the Hon. Member did not have the right to ask the questions he did. He said there was no innuendo intended, and I think all Members must acknowledge that statement and agree. I do not think it is within the realm of this House or any Member to cast aspersions on the statements of any Member