

accept that this integrity is in any way eroded upon leaving Parliament.

• (1630)

I believe that our policies with respect to former Ministers are sound. May I quote from the Prime Minister's letter to Ministers on October 18, 1976, which was tabled in the House of Commons on December 17, 1976 with the draft guidelines. It reads:

The new policy reflects the delicate balance that we have struck between our desire, on the one hand, to respect the right of the individual to use his or her knowledge and abilities for economic gain and personal development and, on the other hand, the requirement of protecting the right of the public to have reasonable assurance that the public interest will not suffer in the process. In adopting this policy, we have been keenly aware of the fact that measures designed to remove every opportunity to act unwisely would require a severe reduction of the traditional rights enjoyed by all Canadians, and place us in jeopardy of losing the spirit, competence and perhaps even the integrity itself of the Canadian public service, which have been so painstakingly nurtured over the years.

We must also avoid the danger of reducing the public benefit which results from the movement of individuals among the various sectors of society—governmental, commercial, industrial, academic and professional. The real concern and focus of our policy is to protect the integrity of government service, and to prevent private exploitation of the public trust.

Many may interpret the Opposition's criticisms as a plea for the prohibition of all contact between Ministers and former Ministers. I would ask all Members to consider what kind of Parliament would result from the implementation of such guidelines. Only the most independent and wealthy individuals could stand for public office under such strict regulations. The pressures to retain office would be inordinate, to the consequent detriment of our system of Government. Perhaps the Opposition would favour such a development, but I personally find it repugnant.

In a true democracy, the elected representatives should be drawn from all walks of life and not the privileged few. Surely my colleagues on both sides of the floor realize the magnitude of the personal and family sacrifices involved in political life. I would humbly suggest that those of a Cabinet Minister are even higher in terms of the demands for work and time. Now more than ever Canada needs its ablest minds in Cabinet. Can we afford to put even further limits and impose greater sacrifices on these individuals? I say no.

There should never be preferential treatment for former office holders, Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries, the Ministers' exempt staff and senior Governor in Council appointees, but surely they cannot be denied the basic right of Canadian citizens to access to the federal Government. The present guidelines adequately protect the public interest during any period of contact with the Government. I cannot envisage any workable system of the type implied by Opposition critics that would prohibit contact of any kind.

I would suggest that if the Hon. Leader of the Opposition or the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent) were at least serious about their motion, they would have consulted the Government House Leader. If they were in fact serious about the suggestion they made at the opening of

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today's debate, they would have contacted someone in our Party. They chose instead to bring this motion on the floor of the House in the form of a non-confidence motion. That is how we will deal with it, and we will put an end to this witch hunt which seems to be the sole preoccupation of the Hon. Leader of the Opposition. Knowing the limited knowledge the Hon. Member for Yukon has on economic matters, perhaps that justifies his continual witch hunting.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Are Hon. Members rising to ask questions?

**Mr. Blenkarn:** Would the Parliamentary Secretary tell us what he is asking for? He said that Parliament must cleanse itself, and then he said that the Government has nothing to fear and nothing to hide. If that is the case, why would the House not approve of this motion? This motion is in exactly the same terms as the one put to the House in 1974 by a former and respected Member of the House, the Hon. Mitchell Sharp.

If the Government has nothing to fear and nothing to hide, and if Parliament must cleanse itself, why would the House not want this matter to go to committee to be dealt with there? Or, is there something to hide?

**Mr. Ethier:** Mr. Speaker, I think I anticipated that question and I answered it before I sat down. I told them that they did not have the decency to consult with anyone in our Party before presenting that motion of non-confidence. That is how it will be treated, as a non-confidence motion.

**Mr. Blenkarn:** Mr. Speaker, the terms of the motion are identical to the motion that the Government itself put to the House in the past. Surely it is unusual for the Opposition to suggest to the Government to vote as if this was not a non-confidence motion. Does the Government insist upon this being a non-confidence motion? We are prepared to treat this motion as not being one on a matter of confidence.

The Parliamentary Secretary must have something to hide because he is quite at liberty to vote against it. We will not treat this matter as a matter of confidence.

**Mr. Ethier:** Mr. Speaker, I find that difficult to understand. We have to keep repeating our view, but they never seem to understand or want to understand. They could have brought this matter up on any other Opposition day without its being a motion of confidence. The Opposition chose to proceed in this manner and we are now dealing under their rules. I find it very strange—the House Leader smiles—

**Mr. Nielsen:** I am not the House Leader.

**Mr. Ethier:** The Canadian public knows by now his ability to come to the House and play these tricks. But I do not think that we will buy it.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Will the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary tell me, since the House unanimously passed their motion on December 10, 1974, and they are now objecting to passing their motion which was not dealt with after it was passed by the