

*Private Members' Business*

The Speaker may:

(2) Rule out any question which violates the procedures of the House and in the same way deal with irregularities in motions and amendments.

It continues:

(3) Make alterations to proposed motions or may refer them back to the Member for correction.

I am just wondering, Mr. Speaker, if you cannot rule at this time so we can proceed with debate as to whether the motion is receivable. If it is receivable, then let us proceed.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois):** I want to thank hon. members who just spoke. Since I am not an expert on parliamentary procedure, it has always been my policy to give members the benefit of the doubt in debate. This is Parliament, so it means giving all concerned the benefit of the doubt. I will take under advisement the point of order raised by the hon. member for York South—Weston, and meanwhile, I would prefer, in line with our great parliamentary tradition, to let the debate continue, while the Chair may later consider the advisability of extending the debate.

[*English*]

**Mr. Rodriguez:** Well, now we are past the preliminaries we can get into the main round.

Mr. Speaker, what is a conflict of interest for a private member of Parliament? What is a conflict of interest for a public office holder? It seems to me that we have to start with the definition of conflict of interest. For those who are watching, what do we mean by a conflict of interest?

I would like to put on the record that when a member while pursuing his public duties and responsibilities is perceived or has the potential or actually furthers his or her own interest or the immediate family's financial gain, it seems to me that is a definition of conflict of interest that covers both potential, apparent and real.

I see it as a spectrum. At one end of the spectrum we have what I have just described on this ethical spectrum. On the other end of the spectrum, as I see it, we have acts which are premeditated and deliberate. Those are covered by the Criminal Code. I am not intending to

discuss that part of the spectrum, but rather the first part which is more ethical in nature.

My motion deals, as I said, with the first part of the spectrum. So I start by asking the question: Why do we need a conflict of interest bill? Why do we need conflict of interest legislation?

I want to suggest three main reasons. Members may think of other reasons but I can see three particular and precise reasons.

One is that the job of the member of Parliament has changed. There is a new climate. The jobs of MPs and public office holders have changed. In fact the MP today, the member of Parliament, the public office holder, has so much more influence than 20 to 25 years ago, more influence than when I first came to this place in 1972. We are constantly upgrading the role of the private member. There is a demand by parliamentarians to make members of Parliament more influential in the whole process of law making, in the whole process of decision making in the House of Commons.

Just think of the changes in the role of the spouse of the MP. There was a time when the MP was invariably male and the spouse had no outside assets. Her assets were his assets and that spouse was invariably, 99 per cent of the time, someone who stayed at home.

That has all changed now, thank heavens. We are finding that women are taking their place in the House of Commons. Women have businesses of their own. They have professions of their own. There is a whole change in the climate in which MPs and public office holders operate today.

Second, I would like to point to technological changes mainly in communications. There are more functions. Think of the thousands of people who MPs interface with every year. MPs now are the target of lobbyists, whether it is anti-gun legislation, program legislation, anti-banking legislation or whatever.

MPs are involved with thousands of people. Elected members attend a multiplicity of functions on a yearly basis. A multiplicity of functionaries hover around elected members, and government affects them all; Parliament affects them all.

The third aspect is an important one. Public expectations are different. When I first came here the House of