

the difference between a Jew and a potato? The punch line: The potato doesn't scream when it is put in the oven.

Mr. Keisler was justifiably upset and shared the information with a human rights group which was meeting with him. The result was that the information became public. But did the Department investigate the persons who circulated the jokes? Yes, and they were disciplined, but not as severely disciplined as the guy who blew the whistle. Did the Department institute a training program with regard to prejudice and discrimination? No, but it investigated the man who blew the whistle and fired him for abusing his telephone privileges. Did the Department investigate the use of telephone privileges by all employees? We do not know, because the Department will not tell us.

During all of this the Minister has been strangely silent. We would like the Minister to mandate an independent investigation and end her silence.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

GOVERNMENT CONTRACT—ROLE OF DOUGLAS ROBSON

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. Apparently a \$234,000 advertising contract was awarded to Lawson Murray Ltd. Apparently the firm's President is Mr. Douglas Lawson, who is the Minister's brother-in-law. The Vice-President of the firm is Mr. Douglas Robson, who was, and still is, the President of the Conservative riding association for the Minister.

Did the Minister of Finance, when he became Minister, retain Mr. Douglas Robson to advise him in helping to set up the Department? Was Mr. Robson paid by the Department? Did Mr. Robson have access to departmental papers or to briefings from officials?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, most of what the Leader of the Opposition said is correct. Mr. Robson was asked by me, as someone who had served as my executive assistant in 1979, to help me get my office off and running because of the tremendous pressures which I was under at that time. He did so. We had a verbal understanding that he would be paid, and, in fact, he was not paid. During that time his responsibilities were exclusively on the administrative side and did not involve policy orientation.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST GUIDELINES

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the man whom the Minister asked for advice in setting up the office, and who stayed in the Minister's office,

presumably had access to papers in the office and happenings within the Department of Finance. The man then left the office and went back to work for Lawson Murray. It is my understanding that he was a member of that firm and sought a leave of absence to come to Ottawa and help the Minister.

Does the Minister believe that under those circumstances the awarding of an advertising contract to that firm was right? Did he discuss with Mr. Robson, if he dealt with him verbally, the guidelines of the Prime Minister relating to conflict of interest? Does he not believe that those guidelines have been broken? Does he believe that this was the correct procedure for himself, and subsequently, Mr. Robson, to adopt?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make one thing very clear. My Robson was sworn as my executive assistant in 1979. I believe that he was sworn again at this point. I should point out that he did not retain his corporate directorships while he was doing work for me. I believe that should register on the Leader of the Opposition.

I might also say that the work which he did was of an administrative sort and that it was not of a policy-oriented sort. He knew the way in which I operated back in 1979 when he was my executive assistant. He knew the type of operation I wanted to set up, so it was very easy for me to have confidence in him to get on with the job of establishing my office at a very difficult and busy time in my own life.

• (1420)

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): The man, Mr. Robson, left Lawson Murray Limited, came to the Minister to help him, and then went back to Lawson Murray and that firm received a \$234,000 advertising contract.

PRIME MINISTER'S POSITION

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): My supplementary question is directed to the Prime Minister. On July 7, 1984, the Prime Minister said at a public press conference; "Brothers and brothers-in-law are appointed to positions all over the place. It's a real scandal to act with such scorn towards the people of Canada, towards the average Canadian". Does the Prime Minister not feel that this family affair is a real scandal? Does he not feel that in this instance the people of Canada have been treated with scorn? Does the Prime Minister not believe that conflict of interest guidelines which he set up for his Ministers and their staff have been breached?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): The Minister of Supply and Services can, for example, and will—I am sure my right hon. friend would want to have it—file in the House an indication of the absolute integrity of this firm. For example, having received the contract by independent tender via another Ministry, it then recommended that this work be discontinued, that these practices were wasteful of government money and that \$417,000 could be saved in the future. I think