

piece of legislation regarding women's rights and who as Prime Minister—

An hon. Member: It is on the order paper.

Miss MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Why this sudden interest by the Prime Minister, who has never made a major speech on the subject in this House and seldom outside? Why this sudden interest by the Prime Minister who has promised a human rights commission, the major recommendation of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, in throne speech after throne speech, yet has not seen fit to introduce it in the House of Commons? But he salutes Canada's contribution to International Women's Year with a \$500,000 untendered advertising award to a firm which comes up with the slogan "Why not?" Why not a woman, indeed!

● (1730)

The chauvinistic campaign which is shortly to be launched to tell the world about Canada's contribution to international women's year could have been written by the Prime Minister himself. Why, even his expletives are chauvinistic! Why this sudden interest in women's rights? It is because the Prime Minister must have a diversionary tactic to draw attention away from this loophole in his conflict of interest guidelines for cabinet ministers. Mr. Speaker, it does not matter how serious the matter or how sensitive the issue, the weapon of obfuscation can always be pulled from the Prime Minister's arsenal. So it is with this vitally important issue.

But if the Prime Minister thinks his belated discovery of the women's movement, and his misguided efforts to ride like Sir Lancelot to do battle on their behalf when faced with questions about the conflict of interest of spouses of cabinet ministers, will impress those who are making serious efforts toward equality in this country, let me disabuse him of any such thoughts. He will find that such use of a serious movement is an insult to millions of Canadians.

Sir Winston Churchill said:

It is a principle of public life that ministers must so order their affairs that no conflict arises, or appears to arise, between their private interests and their public duties.

Obviously the financial interests of spouses are closely linked to minister's private interests.

I find two glaring faults in the government's handling of conflict of interest regulations, regulations which are so fundamental to the credibility of our entire political system: First, quite simply the government accords no priority to legislation respecting cabinet ministers. Second, in what it has proposed there is no provision for conflict of interest as it relates to spouses. Mr. Speaker, this issue includes the virtue of both Caesar's wife and Calpurnia's husband.

Mr. Hal Herbert (Vaudreuil): Mr. Speaker, I must admit I am somewhat surprised. I thought we were involved in a discussion on conflict of interest, and instead it seems we are involved in a debate on women's rights.

An hon. Member: The Minister of the Environment (Mrs. Sauvé) started that.

Conflict of Interest

Miss MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Your leader introduced it.

Mr. Herbert: I listened very carefully, and I felt that the hon. member for Ahuntsic (Mrs. Sauvé) made some interesting points which I had intended making myself in connection with the rights of my wife and her intentions in life.

Since we are discussing women's rights perhaps I might set the record straight. This government has amended the divorce law, the abortion law, the Labour Code relating to women, the Unemployment Insurance Act as it relates to women, and has legalized the sale of contraceptive materials. It was the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), when Minister of Justice, who introduced the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. I think at this particular stage we should get off the subject of women's lib and get back to what we really should be discussing which is conflict of interest.

Although I have been here only two short years many things are not a surprise to me. However, one major surprise to me is the absolute hypocrisy we have heard in this House. The subject of conflict of interest which we are discussing today certainly is not a new subject. Surely it is a subject which every member must have considered when he came to this House.

First, we might ask what got us off the rails and why we are debating this subject today? A bit of scandal which was reported in today's *Ottawa Journal* sets this out in very clear terms. The article is entitled "This miasma of scandal". We are debating this issue today because of alleged violence by members of the Seafarers' International Union and because of campaign contributions to some cabinet ministers. That really, in essence, is why we are discussing this question today. That in itself is hypocritical.

I shall quote part of the article from the *Ottawa Journal* which I consider very appropriate. It states:

What ...

—Opposition members—

... should not do is make charges of impropriety without evidence and suggest that the acceptance of union support ... was in any way wrong in itself.

Most Canadians ... know elections must be paid for and they know the system depends upon all sectors supporting the political process.

This is where we start today's debate. In fact we started today's debate not on conflict of interest but on campaign contributions. I wish now to read something that is more apropos to today's discussion. I refer to a paragraph on the first page of the green paper which has been tabled, and which is the subject for discussion today. It states:

A conflict of interest denotes a situation in which a Member of Parliament has a personal or a private pecuniary interest sufficient to influence, or appear to influence, the exercise of his public duties and responsibilities.

We might consider first of all the point in reference to a member of parliament. It has been suggested in the amendment that there is a refusal to consider conflict of interest which might apply to ministers of the Crown. I suggest that first we must look at ourselves, every single one of us, and stop talking as if the situation is serious if it is big, and not too serious if it is small. I suggest there is