

### Supply

to Members reading newspapers on the floor of the House of Commons. I would tell him that we are all quite interested in the editorial in today's edition of *The Toronto Star* which referred to the unfair criticism of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson). The Hon. Member will know that that is not a newspaper which often supports our Party.

I can also understand the Hon. Member's concern when he finds volunteers coming forward to help our Party because, after all, the Liberals paid hacks to do the same thing. During the course of his remarks the Hon. Member asked whether the country could afford this type of Government. I want to ask him specifically which he prefers. Does he prefer a Liberal Government which increased Government advertising expenditures from \$47 million in 1982-83 to \$67 million in 1983-84 and to \$77.5 million in 1984-85, to a Government such as the Conservative Government which contracted with an advertising agency that came up with a recommendation suggesting that we not do it any more and save taxpayers money? Would the Hon. Member tell the House and the country whether he suggests that a Government is responsible if it goes from \$47 million in Government advertising to \$77.5 million in Government advertising, or is it more responsible to have a Government that contracts with people who come back and say, "Don't do this again; it is a waste of money"? Which does the Hon. Member prefer?

**Mr. Johnston:** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Simcoe North (Mr. Lewis) has raised quite a remarkable red herring. He knows from my own record as President of the Treasury Board and as one who implemented the Lambert Commission report that no one is more concerned with value for money for Canadian taxpayers than I am. On that we have complete agreement.

**Mr. Lewis:** But you were a minority in the Liberal Government.

**Mr. Johnston:** That is not the issue, that is not the issue. If the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Andre) is able, in the exercise of his functions, to save money for Canadian taxpayers and still deliver a good service, so be it; that is fine. As far as the editorial in *The Toronto Star* is concerned, which seems somehow to have found its way into the preamble to that question, all I can say is that I never thought I would see the day when a member of the Conservative Party would cite *The Toronto Star* as an authority. That must be the progressive part of the Progressive Conservative Party.

Let me ask the Hon. Member a question which I know he is not obliged to answer. You may recall, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Supply and Services breaking his arm patting himself on the back for the \$500,000 he had saved. I see that he is now in the House. I cannot find it in *Hansard*, but I heard him say distinctly in the House that he had saved taxpayers a ton of money. He nods his head, perhaps to agree that that was the language he used.

**Mr. Andre:** \$500,000 a year.

**Mr. Johnston:** He used the term "a ton of money". I would ask the Minister of Supply and Services, if I had the opportunity, whether the increase in the budget of the Office of the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) by \$2 million would represent not less than four tons of money. That is as much a red herring as the question posed by the Hon. Member for Simcoe North.

**Mr. Hawkes:** Mr. Speaker, I have a quick question for the Hon. Member. As past President of the Treasury Board, could he tell us exactly what were the guidelines or what was the process to examine every untendered contract with in-laws? What system was in place when he was the Minister to look at every contract to see whether an in-law was involved?

**Mr. Johnston:** Mr. Speaker, the guidelines are printed in the regulations of the administrative policy branch of the Treasury Board. The Minister of Supply and Services has access to them. To be quite honest, I do not recall specifically any guideline which refers to in-laws *per se*. I do not think that is the issue. It is one of conflict of interest guidelines. The issue is: Why did the firm of Mr. Robson, who worked in the Minister's office and who did not sign those conflict of interest guidelines, receive that contract? Had he signed those conflict of interest guidelines, the Hon. Member knows full well that he would have been bound by them and unable to deal with that particular Department or any agency of that Department for a two-year period. That is the issue here in terms of the guidelines.

Also this particular individual, as I pointed out in my comments, had access to sensitive materials in that office to which he had no business having access. I hope the Hon. Member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes) would agree with me that we cannot afford to have offices of Ministers flowing with people from the private sector, and on the payrolls of private corporations assisting Ministers in these sensitive areas, and not being subject to any conflict of interest guidelines. They should not be there anyway, never mind the conflict of interest guidelines.

**Mr. Hawkes:** As past President of the Treasury Board, is the Hon. Member providing this Government with the advice that it is practical to have every contract let by every public servant in the country examined for possible involvement of in-laws of Cabinet Ministers? Is that a practical, feasible proposal in his view after all his years of experience?

**Mr. Johnston:** I am sympathetic to the work-load of the Minister of Supply and Services, but surely the Hon. Member for Calgary West is not trying to excuse the contract given to Lawson Murray which has been described by spokesmen in the Ministry itself as pure patronage. Surely the Hon. Member for Calgary West is not positing before the House and the people of Canada, based on the facts that we have heard, that people were not aware of what Lawson Murray was and what the relationships were.