

Conflict of Interest

Mr. Rodriguez: Come on!

Mr. Bouchard (Lac-Saint-Jean): I personally know the Prime Minister. He is one of the most honest men I know in the world. He is a friend of 25 years. I would not be in politics and be here if I did not believe that the Prime Minister is a man of great honesty. It is completely disgraceful that people in the House of Commons, at this great historical moment when we speak about adoption of great legislation for the future, think about the shoes of the Prime Minister.

There is one further thing I want to say about my election. I could not answer any questions previously, because nobody ever asked a question before in the House and I have been here for four months. I read all the rubbish in the newspapers about the fact that my seat was bought. A few days ago in the newspaper I read that \$1.5 billion was spent to buy my election in Lac-Saint-Jean. That is awful. It was a perfectly clean election, and no money was spent to buy anything.

The Minister of Transport (Mr. Bouchard) simply announced that the pavement of the airport would be redone. That has been a project for four years, and it simply came up at that time, and it is only \$1.10 million. We established a fund of \$1.4 billion to create jobs, and that is all, and a few things like that.

Ms. Copps: A few millions here and a few millions there.

Mr. Bouchard (Lac-Saint-Jean): The Opposition attempts to make the people believe that the federal-provincial announcement of \$120 million for the development of the region of Saguenay, Lac-Saint-Jean, was tied to my election. It is ridiculous, everybody knows that, and the opposition Members know it themselves perfectly well. It was simply the renewal of the framework agreement between Quebec and Ottawa, signed each five years, for the development of the regions of Quebec. It was late, it was due, and it has been waited for and expected for four or five months, and it was only announced then.

It was also announced that the Government would spend \$100 million for the cleaning of the St. Lawrence River. Opposition Members all attribute that to my election. I must say that I am very proud that the Government assumed its responsibilities for the environment and the cleaning of the St. Lawrence. It would be a scandal not to do so.

In conclusion, one has to accept such things in politics, and I know it. It is very difficult. I am sure more and more we will see fewer people ready to accept it.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Order, please. The question and comment period has expired. Resuming debate. The Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps).

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Madam Speaker, I am damned surprised that a Minister of the Crown would deliver . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): I am sure the Hon. Member would want to use the kind of language which is suitable for the House of Commons.

Ms. Copps: Madam Speaker, I am bloody surprised that a Minister of the Crown would have us believe that expenditures of \$1 billion here and \$1 billion there in Lac-Saint-Jean were sheer coincidence.

Madam Speaker, this statement by the Minister is one of the reasons why we are having this debate on conflicts of interests, and this has to be an unbelievable joke on the part of a Government whose recent history spells corruption of people who sought to take full advantage of the system.

I am not surprised that the Minister chose not to answer my question concerning a Member and former Minister, Sinclair Stevens, for we on this side are getting used to hearing the Prime Minister claim that he will introduce a Bill on conflicts of interests while at the same time he has no qualms whatsoever about supporting as a Conservative Party representative a Member whom a Tory-appointed judge found guilty of 14 conflicts of interests. This man is highly regarded and still belongs to the Conservative caucus, yet even his colleagues did not ask that he be thrown out as they did in the case of others who found themselves in a similar predicament.

So it is false to pretend that we will regroup here as one big family.—For instance, the Minister mentioned a big statue in Athens, the statue was weighed at Athens to see whether the gold would weigh the same before and after the insults about conflicts of interests, but I would like to tell the Minister that the \$2.1 million statue which was loaned to the wife of a former Minister of the Crown was not visible. It was money tied to an interest-free loan made directly to the wife of a Conservative Minister of the Crown because of his responsibilities. Moreover, the Minister claimed in his speech that several other Governments found themselves in the same predicament. Let him name them, because according to Mr. J.M.S. Careless, who ranks among the best-known Canadian historians or it is not the Liberal Party or the New Democratic Party, but J.M.S. Careless who wrote a few months ago that this is the first time in Canadian history that Ministers and Members have been trying to benefit from Government funds, something Mr. Sinclair Stevens who is going to run again under the Tory banner during the forthcoming federal election did shamelessly.