

Supply

head that he finally said: "Bang"? It was not a bang but a whimper.

● (1720)

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I have learned around this place is that if one waits long enough, the worm turns and that in fact everything tends to repeat itself.

I sat in the House when the former Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion was a member of the Opposition. I have heard a lot of sanctimonious gobbledegook thrown around here about how the character of the Minister is being slandered, as is that of the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Nielsen). I wish to tell Hon. Members that I have been checking back copies of *Hansard* for 1976, 1977 and 1978. I wish to warn members of the Official Opposition that they ought not be too hasty because there comes a time when there is "another" time. One must have a long memory around here.

I remember back in 1974 when the former Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion accused the Liberal Government of paying off its friends through Economic Development Council loans. In particular, he cited a loan to Quebec's Davie Shipbuilding Limited which he said benefited because well-known Liberal Paul Martin, Jr. was President of its owner, Canada Steamship Lines. Talk about a person who can really get in there in the gutter and start throwing it around!

Then, in November of 1976, he accused a former Minister of Health, Marc Lalonde, of conflict of interest for accepting a free trip on a Seagrams' jet to Israel. Some two years later, in December of 1978, he circulated a news-letter written by John Turner, who was practising law in Toronto. The news-letter criticized Jean Chrétien, the then Minister of Finance, for his handling of the country's finances. The ex-Minister said that Turner may have violated conflict of interest guidelines for former office holders.

Then, in May of 1978, the ex-Minister charged that a group of Liberal MPs and Cabinet Ministers had manipulated the Canadian dollar to their own advantage. Unable to prove the accusation, he eventually had to back down and apologize.

So I wish to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I recognize that these things happen again and again. Those who stand accused today are the ones who were the accusers at a previous time. Let us not get sanctimonious in this place. One has to keep in mind a sense of history when one is dealing with these types of matters.

It is fairly obvious that in our system of Parliament we have tried, and we continually try, to create an atmosphere of transparency in our parliamentary system. In effect, what we try to do is to ensure that the public is aware that we conduct ourselves with the highest possible ethics. Not only do we actually do it but it must appear that we do it. Thus we are consistently aware of providing opportunities for the public to know. That is why we have invoked such measures and passed

into law the Election Expenses Act. This was done so that corporations and individuals who contribute more than \$100 have to declare it. In fact, one could go to the Chief Electoral Officer and see who has given how much to which Party. This is also why we have the Access to Information Act. The whole purpose of that Act is that the public have the right to know. That is why the Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges and Procedure is looking at doing something about registering lobbyists on the Hill. This is why the area of great concern, the one with which we are dealing today, involving the question of conflict of interest, has been dealt with by previous Governments. However, it seems that it is still too "loosey-goosey". It is still not tight enough. The Clark Government of 1979 established conflict of interest guidelines for cabinet Ministers. In fact, they were very clear, direct and exact. With respect to controlled assets it stated:

Ministers, their spouses and minor or dependent children may not, after the completion of any arrangements necessary to comply with these Guidelines, purchase, sell or retain any direct interest in any controlled assets including—

The guidelines go on to list them. It was fairly clear that the former Prime Minister wanted that type of control. He wanted to assure the public that there would be not only an actual dissociation but that it would appear to be so.

Then along came the Trudeau Government of 1980. It also changed the guidelines. It issued new guidelines to cabinet Ministers. With respect to spouses and dependent children, Section VII of the guidelines states that they do not directly apply to spouses or dependent children of Ministers. It then goes on to state:

It goes without saying that Ministers must not transfer their assets to their spouses or dependent children with a view to avoiding the requirements of these guidelines.

Ministers should also bear in mind their individual responsibility to prevent conflicts of interest, including those that might conceivably arise or appear to arise out of dealings in property or investments which are owned or managed in whole or in part, by their spouses or dependent children.

So we have the same principle being reiterated by the Trudeau Government of 1980. The Government then set up the Starr-Sharp Commission to look into the matter. A member of the Government, the then Hon. Member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, was the director of that commission. It considered conflict of interest for cabinet Ministers. In fact, the Leader of the New Democratic Party wrote to the chairpersons of the Starr-Sharp committee and gave the views of the New Democratic Party. I wish to quote from that letter, which states:

The 1980 guidelines expressly exempt spouses and dependent children from their purview. This reflects a view that each spouse may wish to pursue her or his own career. Because their careers are "independent", the financial details of only one are now required to be disclosed. This is wrongheaded. Despite separate careers, marriage remains in part an economic union, a partnership of equals.

As has been recognized to varying degrees in family law reform legislation, each spouse may have a pecuniary interest in the economic activities of the other during (and after) a marriage. The conflict of interest provisions should not ignore this interest.