

Oral Questions

Miss MacDonald: I can also assure the Hon. Member that the action that will be taken will be to the long term benefit of the people who are concerned.

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PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE**DIRECT MAILING SYSTEM**

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. It pertains to the article today in the newspaper indicating that the Prime Minister's Office will have a new \$7.5 million direct mailing program.

Would the Deputy Prime Minister be prepared to admit that this program, in conjunction with the polling contract about to be let, will be used to transfer the cost of campaigning from the Conservative party to the taxpayers of Canada and that it will be under the control of the Prime Minister's Office?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, the suggestion contained in that question is almost as scurrilous as its source.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT POLLING CONTRACT

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): Mr. Speaker, my second question and supplementary is to the Minister of Supply and Services. Would the Minister of Supply and Services confirm for this House that the Government is now prepared to grant a \$10 million plus contract for Government polling and that the primary recipients will be two Conservative polling firms?

Mr. Crosbie: The master of scurrility.

Hon. Stewart McInnes (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, I might advise the House that invitations have been extended to more than 32 firms to tender on a polling process now being considered.

Mr. Broadbent: Who is getting contracts?

Mr. McInnes: Twenty-two of those have responded. They are now being evaluated, and a large number of firms all across Canada will be involved in the final decision.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

BANKS AND BANKING**COMMISSION OF INQUIRY—EXERCISE OF MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I am encouraged by the unusual frankness of the Deputy Prime Minister to my colleague, the Hon. Member for Renfrew-Nipissing. Let me, therefore, put a question to him. The Deputy Prime Minister knows that it is vital to the inquiry of Mr. Justice Estey to analyze, in the affair of the CCB and the Northland Bank, how the Minister of Finance, the Minister of State for Finance and, indeed, how the Prime Minister exercised their ministerial responsibilities during this whole matter. Does he not think the Government is putting a very eminent judge in as almost impossible position, I suggest even an improper position, for a judicial review of ministerial responsibility, which should be judged by Parliament alone and a committee of Parliament?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I have read the terms of reference once today. I am certain that I do not have to read them again to get through to the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): We know the terms. Just give us the answer.

Mr. Nielsen: I would hope that that inquiry will look into the justification of the kind of statement made September 9 by the Leader of the Opposition that the House had been "misled by the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and, indeed, the Governor of the Bank of Canada," and that obvious inside trading in the deposits of the Canadian Commercial Bank before the plug was pulled occurred. That statement was made by the Leader of the Opposition. A few other such wild statements were made. The terms of reference are broad enough to encompass that kind of inquiry. I would hope that it is examined.

POWERS OF COMMISSIONER

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, does the hon. gentleman, the Deputy Prime Minister, believe it is the judge's role to review what happens in Parliament? Is Parliament not responsible for the actions of Ministers and for the action of everyone here? Why is that being imposed upon a judge?

An Hon. Member: What are you trying to hide, John?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): It would appear that it is necessary, Mr. Speaker, again, to refer to the words of reference where Mr. Justice Estey is empowered to conduct an examination of all of the circumstances and the factors contributing to the condition of the banks resulting in the cessation of their operations. I do not know how much broader such terms of reference could get, even to satisfy the Leader of the Opposition.