

Oral Questions

PATRONAGE—MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister also deals with the Pélouquin case. Yesterday, she was reported as saying: "We have established a competition system. We are dismantling a patronage system". Could the Minister indicate to us when she adhered to her new way of thinking, because concerning the Conservatives, she stated last year in the *Le Soleil* newspaper, and I quote:

Because they are our friends. Because we share the same ideas, the same views, the same ideal.

—thus favoring Conservatives. Is the contract awarded to Mr. Pélouquin an example of good patronage, as she described it last year, or is it an example of the reform she announced yesterday in the House of Commons? Which of the two is it?

Hon. Monique Vézina (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, my only concern is to re-establish fairness. The system which has been implemented has reintroduced competition, something which did not exist before.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian people have at last found a promise which the Conservatives have fulfilled, that of patronage.

[English]

PÉLOQUIN CONTRACT

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, less than an hour ago I was refused a copy of the government contract with Mr. Pélouquin by the office of the Minister of Supply and Services. Could the Minister explain why I was refused a copy of this contract? Is it stonewalling similar to that which I got from her colleague, the Minister of Public Works, with regard to the Vincent Massey affair in Hull? What is the Government trying to prove by hiding these contracts?

[Translation]

Hon. Monique Vézina (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, reconsidering the very efficient system we have set up is out of the question. If the document to which you are referring is available under the freedom of access legislation, I can assure you that you will be able to receive it.

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[English]

PUBLIC WORKS

PLACE VINCENT MASSEY—REOPENING OF LEASE

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Public Works and is

with regard to the multimillion dollar boondoggle at Place Vincent Massey. I have before me a copy of a memo from the former Minister of Public Works to his Deputy Minister in which he states as follows:

With a base rate of \$4.47/sq. ft. and considering that for this type of building the market rate is five times higher, you can understand the financial situation facing Mr. Tessier.

It is now clear that this lease was renegotiated to bail Mr. Tessier out of a lease which he felt was at an unacceptably low rate. Will the Minister explain why his Government placed the private financial interest of Mr. Tessier, who coincidentally happens to be a friend of the Principal Secretary of the Prime Minister, ahead of the taxpayers of Canada? Why did he do that?

Hon. Stewart McInnes (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, apparently the Hon. Member has been absent from the House and perhaps from the country for the last two days because we have had considerable exchange of views about the merit of this proposition. Yesterday we had a press conference dealing with all inquiries relevant to this issue. There is absolutely not one iota or scintilla of evidence to suggest any inappropriate involvement in this issue. I challenge the member for the fifteenth time to put forward on the floor of this House, or outside, the basis of his suggestion that we have done something inappropriate.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, I am quite prepared to say outside what I am saying inside, which is that this memo from the Minister to his Deputy makes it quite clear that the Government was bailing out a friend of the Prime Minister's Principal Secretary.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, why is it that the document setting out the supposed alternatives which the Minister tabled yesterday at his press conference, at which he admitted that these figures were way beyond his scope, was in fact a doctored document which did not exist at the time the original proposal was made? Why does he, through his office, refuse to make available the original documents setting out these alternatives? What is he trying to cover up?

Hon. Stewart McInnes (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, I do not know how one could infer that there has been a cover-up when I had a conference with 40 members of the press and exposed myself to any questions they wished to ask. I had officials there to respond to the computations involved in the four alternatives. That was fully explained. I challenge the Hon. Member or any person of conviction to indicate that we have pursued the wrong course.