

which was a mini-Budget. That mini-Budget, that statement, was delivered in this House of Commons on November 8.

Mr. Robson in fact worked for the Ministry of Finance without pay. He had a verbal agreement to be paid which apparently was not honoured for reasons that have not as yet been explained to us. In any event, he was there during that particularly sensitive period, a period no less sensitive, I suggest, than the period we are now in leading up to the presentation, God willing, of a Budget finally, some time in the latter part of May, we are told during the week of May 20. I cannot help note *en passant* that I had to learn that fact by reading the newspapers rather than hearing it here on the floor of the House of Commons—

**Mrs. McDougall:** You are never in the House.

**Mr. Johnston:**—where the announcement should have been made.

In any event, I come back to the point that this kind of shoddy, shabby administrative practice cannot be condoned. I would hope that the Deputy Prime Minister who is here today and who is known for his concern with propriety and with process will see to it that this kind of thing does not repeat itself, that Ministers are brought into line, that we do not have these volunteers who come in but do not sign conflict of interest guidelines, who work in sensitive areas and go back to their firms on whose payrolls they remain.

In this case there is the added question of the contract. The reason I have not mentioned the contract of \$234,000 is that excluding the contract, excluding the relationship with the brother-in-law, excluding the relationship with the sister who is on the board of directors—all of that apart—we cannot condone this kind of administrative approach, this kind of management approach, this kind of abuse, if you like, this playing, as I said earlier, fast and loose with the well-established traditions of Government. That cannot be tolerated, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker. I know, the Deputy Prime Minister knows, all the Ministers on the front-bench and all the Members on the back-benches know that it cannot be honestly defended.

We know, those of us who have had the privilege of serving in the Government as Members of the Cabinet, how Ministerial offices work. The Deputy Prime Minister became quite exercised when I suggested that Mr. Robson was not supervised. Let me elaborate on that point.

We have been told that Mr. Robson did not have access to secret information. I cannot say whether he did or did not. What I do know is that the Minister himself has declared on the floor of this House that he was particularly pre-occupied during that period, that it was a very busy period in his life, if I recall his precise words, and that he was obliged to spend a good deal of time in Washington; that he had invited Mr. Robson to organize his office in some kind of administrative capacity which has not been explained in detail. Some information has been offered but very little in detail so as to know exactly what Mr. Robson did. He was not there as a paid employee; hence there was apparently no master and servant

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relationship. I do not know who was supervising him, if the Minister himself was not. He maintains that he had a chief of staff who was there. Was the chief of staff going to supervise Mr. Robson, this volunteer from the private sector who probably had more experience of working with the Minister, because of his prior experience, than the chief of staff himself? If that is the case, why was so much emphasis placed upon the oath? That in itself troubled me, the fact that this gentleman was working under oath. That must have been in anticipation of the fact that he might have access to secret documentation, but he did not sign a conflict of interest guideline.

● (1430)

Apart from the other issues which we have heard discussed, apart from the brother-in-law, apart from the untendered contract, apart from all of that, we have here a matter of fundamental administration. It is that issue which I have tried to address in these brief comments.

I must say that I am pleased the Deputy Prime Minister is here. This is not the time, I say to him, to resurrect old grievances and to argue about patronage which existed in the past.

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Johnston:** The issue with which I am dealing is: How on earth are the Ministers operating their Departments? He, as the Deputy Prime Minister, has to step in to ensure that it is done and to ensure that there is no recurrence. As I said this morning in the House—and I repeat it because I think it is worth reflecting on for a moment—we have had a tradition of people coming in and rendering service during particular periods in this country. I know the Deputy Prime Minister has been able to gather together a number of very prominent Canadians to serve on a committee designed to try to find cuts in programs. We look forward to having the Deputy Prime Minister table the results of that committee's deliberations. I am sure those people have had access to certain materials, but I am also sure the Deputy Prime Minister has seen to it that they have either not been given access to anything which would put them in conflict or that they will be respecting conflict of interest guidelines.

This morning I mentioned the famous dollar a year men who stepped forward during the unfortunate period of World War II to offer their services to the Canadian Government for a dollar a year. Here we have, as I said, a Mr. Robson who offered his services apparently free, although there was some verbal understanding which was not followed through on, and then immediately subsequent to leaving the office of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson), his firm, Lawson Murray, Limited of Toronto received an unsolicited advertising contract in the amount of \$234,000. If that does not raise in Hon. Members' minds some questions as to administrative practice in the Ministry of Finance and in other Ministries, if similar events are taking place, I do not know what can.

**Mr. Lewis:** Mr. Speaker, I can understand the Hon. Member for Saint-Henri-Westmount (Mr. Johnston) referring