

Supply

The hitch in the works was that the opposition Parties and, in particular, the Liberal Party, believed there was in fact a flagrant abuse of the whole question of morality and ethics in Parliament and we would not be silenced. Had the Liberal Opposition not pursued this issue from the beginning, the Government's strategy and the strategy of the Acting Prime Minister would have worked. We would have seen beautiful photos of the Prime Minister travelling through South Korea, China and Japan. We would have seen him cosying up to his various Ministers and we would not have gotten to the core of this issue which affects the heart and soul of Parliament. I think the judgment displayed by the Acting Prime Minister was a flawed judgment, but it was a calculated flawed judgment. It was not an error in that he thought that perhaps nothing was wrong. He knew something was wrong and he was sent in as a containment officer to sustain damage control on a Government which had gone out of control. I believe the Prime Minister is every bit as responsible. He was here in the House to answer questions two days following the emergence of the story in the *Globe and Mail*, a story which has never been denied by the Government nor by the Prime Minister. But the Prime Minister sent in his hit man, Erik Nielsen, saying: "Mr. Nielsen, you look after things while I am gone and when I come back I expect everything to be quiet".

Mr. Fretz: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I respectfully submit that the Hon. Member in her speeches today has continually referred to cabinet Ministers by their names. We know that this is inappropriate and I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if you could bring the Hon. Member to order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Member for Erie (Mr. Fretz) is perfectly correct.

Ms. Copps: We know that the Acting Prime Minister was assigned the job of chief stonewaller of the Government. The Prime Minister believed that strategy would work. Unfortunately for the Government it did not work. Fortunately for the people of Canada, we showed that honesty wins out in Parliament. I thank God that the Minister involved was put into the position by the Opposition, and by public opinion, whereby he was forced to resign. I am, however, upset that the Prime Minister and the Acting Prime Minister have still not indicated to the people of Canada that the abuse of ministerial privilege was wrong.

I am looking forward to the arrival of the Prime Minister back in the House when he can start answering some fundamental questions about what he really believes morality in government means. I suspect his perception of morality, given the weight he has attached to certain members of his own Party whose primary role in life before this Parliament was to inflict damage on their own former Leader, is far different from that of the ordinary Member of Parliament in the House of Commons.

Mr. Marchi: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague, the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps), a question

as to where we go from here. She outlined very articulately that it is not only the Government and the particular Minister who loses in this situation but that the institution of Parliament got battered in the process. I would like to ask the Hon. Member if it is correct to have this whole affair sent off to an "impartial" inquiry, as the Deputy Minister (Mr. Nielsen) suggests, or would this issue not be better placed with Members of Parliament through a parliamentary committee so that this Parliament, this institution, can regain some of the integrity it has lost? If the initial strategy was to take this matter out of the limelight, then I ask, as other Canadians are asking, is it the Government's second strategy, through an impartial inquiry, that we not know the terms of reference, nor the individual who will be leading that investigation? Is this part two of that same strategy? Would the Hon. Member for Hamilton East comment on this sensitive matter?

Ms. Copps: First, Mr. Speaker, it was interesting that the Hon. Member for Charlevoix (Mr. Hamelin) said that we are not a court of law. Parliament is in fact the highest court in the land. It is the court to which every Canadian has an opportunity to send his or her representative. Parliament is where this whole question should be dealt with. It is the reputation of Parliament which has been smeared by this Minister and by the Government's refusal to act on this very sensitive issue. It should be Parliament which has a chance to examine all aspects of the issue, not only the private loans which were obtained by members of the Stevens' family as a result of his position, but certainly the changes in government policy with respect to privatization, the whole question of the sales of Teleglobe, Canadair and de Havilland. All of these issues must be examined through the parliamentary process.

Today, for example, the Acting Prime Minister refused to answer in the House whether he would be prepared to testify under oath before an independent commission. It seems to me that if the Government in its usual fashion is continuing to stonewall parliamentary review of this situation, and if it does turn the matter over to a commission of inquiry then, at the very least, we must demand the full access of subpoena as well as testimony under oath, not only by the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister involved in the infraction but also by the Prime Minister himself. It seems to me that the fundamental question which Parliament must answer, and which can only be answered when we have had a chance to review all the facts as they have been put before us, is: Why did the Prime Minister not exercise his moral leadership and responsibility by immediately stepping in when information was made available to him, as it was made available to the whole country, that the former Minister was using his position as a Minister of the Crown in an effort to secure loans for his family business through the agent of his wife and that companies in which he had a majority interest were, in fact, benefiting because of his ministerial connections? Why did the Prime Minister refuse to act as soon as that became known? Why did he refuse to say, as he did in the infamous *The New York Times* interview: "Bang. That Minister has got to go"? Why was it only when the Canadian public put a gun to his