

Anti-Dumping Tribunal

companies. He also said that he was a director and/or officer of these companies. He assured me that the activities of the companies in no manner conflicted with the activities of the Anti-Dumping Tribunal.

I have asked Mr. Bissonnette to resign from positions in any private company which would require a positive obligation at law, such as that of director or officer. This, in itself, would avoid the risk of being required to sit as a director or officer at the same time as he was a member of the Anti-Dumping Tribunal. I have asked Mr. Bissonnette to consider whether these investments are in conformity with the conflict of interest guidelines which were sent to him and acknowledged by him on June 4, 1974. I have pointed out to him that if any investments he does retain put him in conflict with any matter before the tribunal, he would be required to disqualify himself from such matter.

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, the minister, in the statement he just read to the House, has demonstrated once again that this administration is a most permissive one. I would point out the background on this matter. In 1964, the then prime minister, Mr. Pearson, made very clear what the obligations were with regard to public servants. I read from page 3 the submission to his cabinet colleagues of that day where the then prime minister stated:

Equally, a staff member, like a minister, must not have a pecuniary interest that could even remotely conflict with the discharge of his public duty.

It has been assumed, certainly on this side of the House, that that was the high standard of duty that would be required of every public servant. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Macdonald) says that he has now reviewed the circumstances and there does not appear to be any evidence of conflict of interest—but on the other hand, considering the circumstances, he has asked the chairman to resign. Bear in mind that this is an eight-day resignation and the term runs out at the end of this month. That shows how far this government has strayed from the high principles once held by administrations in Canada.

On December 18 there were two significant references to the duties involving public servants which were laid down at that time as guidelines. Item 4 reads:

Public servants should exercise care in the management of their private affairs so as not to benefit, or appear to benefit from the use of information acquired during the course of their official duties,—

Item 6 reads:

All public servants are expected to disclose to their superiors, in a manner to be notified, all business, commercial or financial interests where such interests might conceivably be construed as being in actual or potential conflict with their official duties.

The Minister of Finance owes an explanation to this House. Were these involvements in fact conveyed to him? Did Mr. Gauthier at any time indicate that he did have these pecuniary interests as laid down in item 6 of the guidelines to which I have referred? Specifically, I believe the evidence the minister has referred to is sufficient to justify an inquiry into this matter. It is not enough for the minister to come here and say he has had a chat with the chairman and that he believes there was no conflict of interest, based on the chairman's statements. Surely we are entitled to an inquiry, or at least a reference to a standing committee of this House to go through the travel itinerary

of Mr. Gauthier. Who did he meet? When did he meet them? We should be able to look at the dockets to decide for ourselves whether there was a possible conflict of interest involved as far as the chairman's obligations are concerned.

The minister carefully avoided any suggestion of asking for an accounting as to the travel expenses paid for by the taxpayers of Canada with regard to these extensive private dealings to which he referred. In short, I believe we certainly have prima facie evidence to justify a full investigation into exactly what did transpire in the Anti-Dumping Tribunal, not only with respect to the chairman but also to a member of the tribunal, Mr. Bissonnette.

As far as Mr. Bissonnette is concerned, it is not enough to say that he has been asked to divest himself of private company interests—and I draw the attention of hon. members to this wording, "which would require a positive obligation at law such as those of director or officer." By implication, the minister is indicating that it is quite acceptable to have a certain amount of private business dealings, to have an interest in private concerns, but "do not go too far, and do not get caught." That is not good enough for a standard to be followed by public servants in this country. We need an inquiry.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1510)

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his courtesy in letting us have in advance a copy of the statement he has just made. As for the decision he has taken with respect to Mr. Gauthier and Mr. Bissonnette, that, of course, is his responsibility as Minister of Finance.

Having looked at the rules and at the guidelines in the short time available to me, I suspect the minister has done all he could. I am not sure that what is needed now is an inquiry into how Mr. Gauthier and Mr. Bissonnette have behaved. I suggest there is a much broader issue before us, and one which must not be allowed to lapse.

The real difficulty is that the guidelines applying to public servants are unclear and uncertain. The minister said today, with respect to both these gentlemen, that they have given him certain assurances: they have assured him that what they were doing was not in conflict with their duty to the public. The unfortunate thing is this: as I read the rules, that is all they are required to do. I see the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Stanfield) looking at me; he had something to say on this point, and I shall come to that in a moment.

What is called for is not an after-the-fact inquiry into the activities of those two persons. What is called for is a revamping of the guidelines which affect public servants as far as conflicts of interest are concerned. I want to quote briefly from two authorities—I am one of them, and my leader is another.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Which is the more important?