

*Supply*

motion. Had they accepted, we could have voted regardless of party lines and very objectively on the need to change the guidelines, and I am convinced that many Members on the other side are convinced as I am that they need to be changed. The Prime Minister can talk about changing the guidelines! But why all of a sudden does he agree to change the guidelines if we were wrong to raise questions on this issue for the past 15 days? I suggest that our attitude in the House forces the Prime Minister to say that he is prepared to make some changes. What would they be worth if the Prime Minister were to act as both judge and jury with respect to the implementation of those guidelines? People pass judgment on the attitude of the Prime Minister these past few days. Let him tell me that he will indeed change the guidelines! But if he maintains that only he can make recommendations concerning their implementation, that would not leave me any more confident than I was 15 days ago, and the people have absolutely no guarantee that such changes would restore the credibility we are seeking.

● (1610)

Therefore, if we are to have a thorough review of the application of these guidelines, we think it should be done by a Standing Committee of the House and that is why we are putting a motion to that effect today. We had hoped, and we shall continue to do so until the vote is held, that Hon. Members would understand the impact of this motion. It is a motion that is very important to all Canadians, a motion that is non partisan and whose aim is to restore the integrity and the credibility of Parliament and respect for the individuals who sit as Members of Parliament and represent their parties.

That is why we are putting this motion today. We thought the Government would have been serious, courageous and honest enough to accept our motion, in view of our aims and to provide Canadians with a profound sense of honesty and fairness. The Government has refused or will refuse, and at 5:45 p.m., Canadians will be the judge of the Government's actions, and we shall remind Canadians that the Government is entirely unwilling to take any kind of corrective action that might restore to Parliament the respect it deserves.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Any questions? In that case, the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Ethier) has the floor.

[*English*]

**Mr. Denis Ethier (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment):** Mr. Speaker, it is also my privilege to speak on the motion of the Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Nielsen) which reads as follows:

That the Standing Committee of Privileges and Elections be authorized to consider and make recommendations upon the subject matter of Ministers and conflict of interest; and public servants and conflict of interest.

I intend to restrict my comments to Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries and their exempt staff, and individuals appointed by Governor in Council. I said that it was my privilege to speak on this subject, and I mean it sincerely. At last I have an opportunity to tell my fellow Canadians the

alarm and dismay I feel with respect to the unjustified and often vicious attacks on the integrity of my fellow colleagues, colleagues who work tirelessly and assiduously in the service of Her Majesty's Government, often at a great sacrifice to their personal health and families.

The extent of this attack is unparalleled. Is the Canadian public really to believe that such honourable and distinguished Canadians as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde), the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. MacEachen), Alastair Gillespie, the late Robert Andras, the Hon. Member for Lincoln (Mr. Mackasey) and Norman Cafik are guilty of engaging in some as yet unknown dishonourable activities? These men have devoted the main part of their lives to public duty.

It is my contention that the Opposition has deliberately misinterpreted the content and intent of the Government's conflict of interest and post-employment guidelines and has engaged in a ruthless, unfounded and unprecedented attack on the good character of both current and former Ministers of the Crown. I will leave it to others to speculate why, but I think it is obvious.

However, the Opposition has the effrontery to suggest that the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections should both consider and make recommendations upon the subject matter of Ministers and conflict of interest guidelines. Why should the House even contemplate such an absurd suggestion? For the last month the House has heard allegations of wrong-doing by current and former Ministers of the Crown but not one scrap of evidence.

● (1620)

I submit that this House has had enough of these unwarranted and slanderous attacks. Referral of the guidelines to a committee at this stage would only continue this partisan charade and prolong the unnecessary suspicion and humiliation of innocent Ministers and their families.

If the Opposition is sincere in its suggestion, then I would suggest they participate fully in any of the committee hearings with respect to the Hon. Member for Lincoln (Mr. Mackasey). It is important that the House renew its confidence and that of the Canadian public in the basic integrity of all Members of Parliament. This integrity is the cornerstone of democracy and is absolutely essential to our Canadian system of Government. Parliament, and I say Parliament, must cleanse itself, and quickly, from any lingering image of shadowy or unscrupulous dealings that may have been created by the series of malicious and unfounded allegations. Further review by a parliamentary committee would lead to the continuation of virulent and partisan attacks on the integrity of public officials and further undermine the faith of Canadians in their democratic institutions.

As I mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker, I believe that Members of the Opposition Parties have deliberately misinterpreted the guidelines. In addition, they have repeatedly confused the requirements of present Ministers of the Crown with respect to