

*Registration of Lobbyists*

(Mr. Fraser, and Senator Joan Neuman from Toronto, in List with the designation of Queen's Counsel. I think it is right that the Government should see fit to recognize distinguished lawyers on both sides of the House of Commons, and certainly my hon. friend, the Hon. Member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore is one of those. I should add that I was surprised that he did not wear his gown today for the purposes of this debate.

My hon. friend and I are *ad idem*, Mr. Speaker. Both of us agree that it is absolutely essential to the understanding of Government of the problems of the private sector, whether that happens to be the private sector composed of doctors, manufacturers, farmers, accountants, lawyers, secretaries, women's groups, and what have you, or of particular industries and businesses, that there be an interchange of information between Government and those sectors. It is essential for Government to be attuned to the greatest extent possible with the operation of the private sector. Therefore, my hon. friend and I are *ad idem* that that process must go on.

Equally, it is important that we recognize that through no fault of our own, the word "lobbyist" has taken on a somewhat odious connotation, and that is unfortunate because it seems to imply that anyone who buttonholes a Member of Parliament, or talks to a senior public servant, or a group of them, or even talks to a Cabinet Minister, is advancing at all times a nefarious cause, and that is not so.

It is essential for us as Members of Parliament, and I suppose for the Hon. Members of the other place, to understand the relationship, which is important, and which I characterize in my first reference to "Government's understanding". This Bill, I know, and my Bill, was not designed as a technique to penalize or interfere with, or deal in a negative way with those who are engaged in the legitimate operation of attempting to influence Government—using the word "influence" in its best sense—but what is happening in our society is that all of our instruments are becoming suspect. This Parliament is becoming suspect. Members of Parliament are becoming suspect. The Public Service is becoming suspect. Those who talk and push for a point of view, even legitimately, are becoming suspect. The trust which heretofore existed pretty well throughout the country with respect to all kinds of institutions, is breaking down. People are questioning. The purpose of this Bill is not a negative thrust, as I understand the Hon. Member. It is very positive. It says, "Let us recognize the legitimacy of the function but let us ensure not only that right is done, or that justice is done but that it appears to be done. And what better way is there, or has there been since time immemorial, than full disclosure? We demand more of Members of Parliament who go into a Cabinet than full disclosure. Is it wrong for us to say that those who come to Parliament should be asked at least to give full disclosure?"

My hon. friend's Bill says that those who would attempt to move public policy, whether through Parliament or the Public Service, will have to come forward and declare their interests, not how much money they are making, that is their business,

We have done something in this Parliament, at least for an experiment, and I hope it is an experiment which will last. We years ago, and I believe when it grows out it will have a profound effect on Members of Parliament, on the work of the Members of Parliament and their individual power in terms of particular issues.

• (1730)

We have given the committees of the House an opportunity to be independent and to respond, on their own, to those persons, ideas, associations and groups of people with ideas, who may ask for an expression by Members of Parliament. We are into the second or third day of the experiment but I do not think all Members quite understand the profound change that this can and will make to the House. As the House becomes used to it and as Members become used to the independence they have as a result of the changes, they will be equally aware of the representations they can make and will be asked to make on behalf of interest groups. It is therefore doubly important that interest groups be registered, that they be public and that their interest be disclosed.

We are embarking upon quite an important experiment, Mr. Speaker. When I introduced the earlier Bills, particularly Bill C-432 which was mentioned by my hon. friend, I received a great deal of correspondence from people who have an interest they wish to bring to public officials and to Parliament. This correspondence was very helpful, but it is interesting that not one letter said that the idea of disclosure was wrong. Some had reservations about the form of my Bill and therefore about the form of my friend's Bill—not about the penalty but about the ambit of the Bill. Invariably they said that the idea was sound, but they did present some problems they had with my definition.

I will quote from a letter I received from the Canadian Soft Drink Association in 1976. The writer made some observations as follows: The letter reads in part

A lobbyist would have to be very clearly defined. While we accept the fact that an association may be able to register as a lobbyist, it is unclear whether that automatically covers the chief executive officer of the association, all the staff of the association and all appointed committee members and all directors. This