

*Senate and House of Commons Act**[Translation]*

Madam Speaker, having said that, I would end my remarks by expressing general support for the measure introduced by the Hon. Member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Gottselig), but I hope the Bill will be withdrawn so that the issue raised by the Hon. Member might be debated in a parliamentary commission, and as far as I am concerned preferably the parliamentary commission responsible for looking into conflict of interests.

• (1720)

*[English]*

**Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to respond to this initiative by the Hon. Member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Gottselig) regarding some concerns that he has brought to our attention which I think are legitimate and appropriate. The essence of his Bill would remove any financial or perceived financial impediment that some people might see to their becoming candidates for elected office, in this case as Members of Parliament or, as the Bill also indicates, members of the Senate. That is really quite a statement because once you are in the Senate you are there for a long time. We are talking about people coming from agriculture who, I suppose, for the rest of their lives are subject to some concerns raised here by the Hon. Member for Moose Jaw.

On balance, I believe this is an appropriate initiative and as quickly as we can we ought to put it to the Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges and Procedure. As the previous speaker indicated, since we will be discussing conflict of interest legislation very soon this could possibly be a matter that could be referred to that legislative committee at the appropriate time.

There are concerns which the Hon. Member mentioned with which I agree. He spoke about his experience at the municipal level. I guess most of us have had similar types of experiences. Whenever a vote came up that was perceived to be an obvious conflict, one simply left the room or failed to vote and doing that seemed to take care of things. In my career as a municipal politician I feel it was a rather ineffectual exercise, being well aware of how much influence a single member could exert on his or her colleagues to achieve a particular outcome with or without that individual's participation in the final vote.

A recent initiative that has caused a great deal of concern is the allocation of northern benefits. We have some pretty peculiar parts of Canada that have been referred to now as northern areas which receive special tax consideration. On one side of the street in some communities you are eligible for northern benefits, but if you live on the other side of the street you are not. I suppose if Members of Parliament had an opportunity to determine whether northern benefit allowances for tax purposes should be associated with a particular area we might be inclined for rather obvious reasons to be supportive of some of these initiatives. As the Hon. Member has indicated in his Bill, particularly in the explanatory notes, he refers to

members of the class, such as farmers. The Member mentioned farmers, grain producers and ranchers.

We have various government programs to support the grain industry because of the international competition that is becoming more and more unfair as a result of increased subsidies from both the United States as well as the European Economic community. But we must think about parts of western Canada which this year will be experiencing severe drought problems unless there is quite a dramatic shift in traditional weather patterns. This would result in an initiative such as the Hon. Member is bringing to our attention and perhaps some Members of Parliament would be influenced in terms of their own ranches.

In principle, I am very supportive of the initiative and I want to thank the Hon. Member for bringing it forward. Let me say that in the appropriate committee when we come to examine the behaviour of Members of Parliament as to when they should or should not vote we ought to give that a great deal of consideration.

In conclusion, I do think that rather than proceed in the usual fashion when it comes to proceeding with Private Members' Bills that would be unnecessarily cumbersome, a more expeditious approach probably would be to refer at least the content of this Bill to the appropriate committee, which presumably would be the committee on Elections, Privileges and Procedure.

**Mr. Ken James (Sarnia—Lambton):** Mr. Speaker, first I would like to tell the House that I am a farmer and I have owned a farm so I have a particular interest in the subject which the Hon. Member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Gottselig) has presented. I listened with interest to his speech and to the speeches of the Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell (Mr. Boudria) and the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis).

I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate of Bill C-257. As all Members are aware, the conduct of parliamentarians in relation to conflict of interest is an important public concern today. The Government has acted in this area following Chief Justice Parker's report and has introduced Bill C-114, the Senate and House of Commons Conflict of Interest Act as it is known.

Bill C-257 which we are debating this afternoon also relates to laws governing the conduct of Senators and Members of Parliament in relation to conflict of interest and to the Member for Moose Jaw's concern for that very important point when it comes to general subsidization to Members of Parliament, most specially with regard to the Special Grains Act.

Here we are dealing with existing provisions contained in the Senate and House of Commons Act which prohibit Senators and Members of Parliament from benefiting from any contract, agreement or commission of the Government of Canada which involves a payment of public money. Bill C-257