

*Government Orders*

• (1050)

Without the consent of opposition members democratically elected to the House of Commons, the government, by the sheer force of its majority, imposed the presence of non-elected senators on the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence. Does this not show contempt for the democratic process? Before the Special Joint Committee responsible for reviewing Canada's foreign policy had even started its activities, the Minister of Foreign Affairs announced that from now on, development assistance would no longer be conditional on a country's respect for human rights.

Did the government receive a mandate from the people to that effect? Hardly, if the objections of Canadian stakeholders in the international development sector are any indication. I am thinking in particular of the tens of thousands of Canadians and Quebecers who spend their time and their energies so that NGOs from Canada and Quebec can provide humanitarian aid to the poorest in the world. I am also thinking of the close relationships forged with people in developing countries, relationships that are formed around the concepts of viable development, democratic development and respect for human rights.

In its Bill C-22, dealing with the cancellation of the contract to privatize terminals 1 and 2 at Toronto Airport, the government refuses to make full disclosure of all the dirty tricks surrounding the signing of this privatization contract. It refuses to force the main players in this affair to come before the Standing Committee on Transport.

In clause 10 of this bill, for example, the government gives itself the power to compensate friends of the federal system for services rendered before cancellation. Is our democracy such a good example? Where is this wonderful openness announced by the Liberals? Unfortunately, there is not much more openness in this bill.

For weeks and months, the government, through strategic planning or lack of ideas, reduced the legislative program to very little. The government is taking months and months to develop legislation, but very often it is introduced only the day before consideration in the House, which was the case with this bill. Can we really talk about making parliamentarians more responsible? Do you think that the democratic process is well served by such shortsightedness, such meanness?

In our parliamentary system, opposition parties are part and parcel of the democratic process. Should a government concerned about democratic principles not make a minimum of

effort so that Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, an expression dear to federalists, can play its role efficiently?

The bill amending the Lobbyists Registration Act is at the heart of the debate on democracy, since the activities of these professionals are always the very opposite of the democratic process. Let us keep in mind that in a democratic society the long-standing principle of one man, or woman, one vote is the cornerstone of democracy. By definition, lobbyists are constantly trying to influence the political power in order to obtain privileges or special favours for a particular individual or group. It is their *raison d'être*.

We may tolerate this practice as a necessary evil, but we cannot accept the lack of transparency which too often accompanies it. The present bill, aimed at bringing transparency to the practice of lobbying in Canada, is broadly based on the commitments contained in the Liberal red book. Originally, the provisions of the bill were supposed to be much more stringent than any existing legislation. However, if we look at it more closely it falls short of the commitments made by the Liberals during the last election campaign and does not meet citizens' expectations concerning the promised reform.

Of course, some elements of the bill are in keeping with the Bloc Quebecois' ideas on this issue. It appears that some amendments to the Lobbyists Registration Act match the recommendations made by the Commons committee.

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According to the bill, the Governor in Council designates the ethics counsellor who, among other things, has to develop a code of conduct. The ethics counsellor is also mandated to investigate alleged violations. However, the ethics counsellor is designated by order of the Governor in Council. Why is the ethics counsellor not accountable to Parliament, instead of just the Prime Minister?

Also, the bill seems to have diluted other important demands made by the Bloc Quebecois. For example, lobbyists are only required to disclose the name of the government department or institution they will be lobbying and not the amount of money they will be spending on their activities, if such activities are subject to an investigation.

Moreover, the code of conduct to be developed by the ethics counsellor will not be a statutory instrument. With this provision, the government significantly reduces the impact of the code.

Political actions of members sitting in this House are very often offset by the cynicism many voters feel towards the politicians whom they do not trust any more. For too long now, they have heard politicians make promises and do the exact opposite. Interdependence is not something you have to take into account only at the international level. All elected members