power. Ordinary Canadians, if they come to Ottawa from, say, my riding and want to get a decision out of the Government, would come to myself as their Member of Parliament. That is legitimate, and I would do everything I could to help, but they could not hire an expert or someone who had spent perhaps their working life in the bureaucracy in Ottawa learning all the ins and outs, nor could they hire someone who had spent their working life supporting a political candidate who then becomes Prime Minister and, therefore, has a special insight on how decisions get made in Ottawa.

Why does this legislation fail to provide this kind of information, information that would tell us who is doing the mapping activity in Ottawa? Who leads those people who want to get something out of the Government through corridors of power? Who shows them the dark accesses to power that exist in this capital? Who shows them how to get to the real decision makers and how much are they paid? This kind of information is not available as a result of this legislation. I would say that the public will learn very little about lobbying activities from this legislation, and that is why I say it is a sop to public opinion. It is an effort for the Government to get away from the reputation that it has developed as a Government of scandal.

This legislation has loopholes. We all know the tax legislation has loopholes, but this legislation coming through today is like Swiss cheese; it has many holes.

We have here a two-tier system for the registration of lobbyists. Surely to goodness, if you are going to register lobbyists, you want to register them all and you want to treat them all the same and get the same information from everybody. You want to have a sense of fairness, and you want to know what is going on in all the lobbying activities in the capital. This Government has chosen, instead, to say: "Okay, we will ask for one set of information from one set of lobbyists and something different, something less, from another set of lobbyists".

The Tier II lobbyists are presented to us as the weak cousins, the poor cousins, of the lobbying industry. These are the guys who do not have to give as much information, I assume because they are the 80-pound weaklings on the beach. They will not be able to deliver a punch when it comes to getting a decision out of the Government. Who are these two-tier lobbyists? One is the Business Council on National Issues, BCNI. We have this alphabet soup of the lobbying world: BCNI, CGI, PJI, PAI, PMA, or PAM. It is a maze, but what is BCNI? It is an association, a group of the most powerful corporations in this country. This is corporate Canada. These are the largest companies in the country. They have got together in an organization called the Business Council on National Issues. These are no wimps, Mr. Speaker. The Minister may look like a wimp having presented such toothless legislation to this House, but BCNI is no wimp. This group convinced the Government to bring in the free trade proposal even though the issue was not mentioned in the last election.

Let me sum up. This legislation is full of loopholes. It is letting through the gate the most powerful lobbyists that operate in this capital—the Business Council on National Issues, the trade association, the Bankers' Association, and the Pharmaceutical Association. These are powerful groups which have had a real impact in this House and in this Parliament. These groups have convinced the Government, even though they did not tell the people so, to sign a trade deal with the American Government. These are the people who convinced the Government to scuttle the generic drug legislation and who convinced the Government to remove the protection ordinary Canadians had on drug prices. These people have been let through the gate without being asked the full range of information required of other lobbyists.

● (1650)

Because of the loopholes in this legislation we have to conclude that it is not really meant to control lobbyists. It is not really meant to throw the kind of light on lobbying that would inform the public. It is not really meant to enhance democracy. It is simply a sop to public opinion by a Government that was wallowing in scandals and desperate to get the negative news about it off the front pages of the newspapers.

This is damage control legislation. It is not meant to rein in the lobbyists or the most powerful interest groups in this country. It seeks to improve the image of the Government. It seeks to send out a message to the public that the Government is doing something about influence in the capital.

I have examined the facts and, having done so, I have to agree with the impassioned plea of my colleague who pointed out that this legislation did not deserve the support of this House. It is inadequate not only because it lets the most powerful slip through the net, but even because those little fish it catches do not have to supply adequate information. They are not required to tell us how much they are spending on lobbying, promoting letter writing campaigns, on mass advertising campaigns, or on mapping and leafing through the maze of government decision-making processes. This legislation is nothing other than a token gesture in an effort to make the public believe that the Government is concerned about the use and abuse of influence in the capital.

If the Government was really concerned about that, it would have taken seriously the recommendations of the committee that studied the issue. The committee said that if we wanted to throw light on the activities of lobbyists, if we wanted to enhance and protect democracy, then we had to have all possible information about the activities of all lobbyists.

I am sad but not surprised that after the Prime Minister promised tough lobbying registration two and a half years ago, we are getting a watered down piece of public relations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr. Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, when this Bill was in committee I tried to amend the legislation so that a registry for