

I would also like to tell the House that I had an opportunity to serve as a member of the task force on regulatory reform, which was struck by this government. We heard a great deal about people who could not obtain information they needed in order to function properly. I think this hampers our process. People cannot work effectively if they are at the disadvantage of not having all the information which pertains to them or where the government has set a regulation in a unilateral way without a great deal of consultation with the people who will be affected. The government does not allow a great deal of intervention. It does not consult people who will be affected by regulations. Then the regulations are enacted, and we still do not have access to the information. We do not have access to the internal workings of the regulations and the statutes of Canada. This places the general public at a great disadvantage when dealing with government. Companies, labour unions, consumer groups and individuals throughout the country told us of their frustration when they came before the task force on regulatory reform.

Although it does not directly relate to this bill, at this time I would like to say that I enjoyed being a member of the task force on regulatory reform. I hope the government will move to implement some of the recommendations made in our final report, which was tabled in this House on December 19. It was presented to the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Johnston). I encourage him and his government to take action with respect to some of those recommendations. These recommendations, along with this freedom of information legislation, will do a great deal to bridge some of the gap between the public and the government. I suppose I should say the private sector and the government.

My main concern about freedom of information is with respect to the protection of the rights of individuals about whom the government has information in its files. I want to see very stringent controls applied so that information about individuals or companies will not be released by the government, which would place individuals in an embarrassing position or which would place businesses, large or small, in an uncompetitive position. I hope these rights will be protected and that there will not be any information released with respect to the internal secrets of a company which would place it in a bad position in the free market.

As I said, these many concerns will be addressed in the committee, Mr. Speaker. I have enjoyed the opportunity of speaking briefly on the freedom of information legislation. In closing, I would again like to commend the government for taking a step toward improving government accountability.

**Mr. Don Blenkarn (Mississauga South):** Mr. Speaker, I really had no intention of rising on this bill until problems with respect to certain files in my office brought it to mind. I thought I should relate to this House some of my thoughts with respect to the obligation of ministers of the Crown to be more forthcoming with members of Parliament. After all, Mr. Speaker, there are not very many of us. There are only 282 of us in Canada. As members of Parliament we have taken an

oath before the Clerk of this House to respect Parliament and our obligations to the Queen.

● (1750)

Often it is necessary for an hon. member in the exercise of his duty to have additional information about the people with whom he may be dealing. Some time ago I had a problem with respect to representations made to me by a constituent. I suspected that somehow this constituent may be a member of an organization which was not operating in the interests of Canada. In that regard I made inquiries of the Solicitor General (Mr. Kaplan) because I wanted a private briefing with him in order to obtain information which the Royal Canadian Mounted Police might have on that person and the organizations with which he was involved.

As a member of Parliament, I take my obligations to Canada seriously. I did not want to wind up taking a position on behalf of that person which would in any way jeopardize my obligations to Canada or assist in the promotion of some organization the real purpose of which may not be in the interests of Canada. I was disappointed because I did not get that confidence from the minister. The minister's view was that he should not tell me anything and, therefore, I was on my own.

In a way it is sad that we must have a freedom of information bill. Ministers of the Crown have an obligation to members of Parliament, their colleagues, to be forthcoming, even if it is on a very personal, private or confidential basis. We, as members of Parliament, are entitled to the confidence of ministers, and ministers are entitled to rely on our undertakings not to divulge the sources from which we obtain confidential information. To some extent, this bill is required by members of Parliament because in many cases we have not been able to obtain some of the most elementary information from the Crown.

I would like to outline a matter of elementary information because some suggestion has been made that contracts and things which might affect private corporations and businesses should not necessarily be made public. I understand that line of thought. However, recently, I have been carrying on a running battle with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. LeBlanc) concerning some leases on waterfront property in the city of Mississauga. The waterfront property was at one point in the town of Port Credit.

Roughly six years to eight years ago the Government of Canada leased a large harbour facility in Port Credit to a company called Port Credit Harbour Marine. That lease was negotiated in a very interesting fashion for a period of 20 years, and it covers an important marina on a very important commercial facility in my city. Over the past year I have been renegotiating a lease on an abutting property with the Government of Canada for the Port Credit Yacht Club. Strangely enough, the rental arrangements for this very significant facility occupied by Port Credit Harbour Marine are not available.

Members of Parliament sometimes have other methods of learning about matters. I was told that I could go to the