

*Registration of Lobbyists*

The time of a Member of Parliament is valuable. Therefore, when they take time to listen, they should be assured the benefit of expert witnesses and quality information. If there is not an established mechanism to sift through lobbyists, we cannot be assured that true representatives of groups get a chance to speak. We also risk wasting time on unnecessary representations.

By registering lobbyists, we would give Members of a given committee access to a master list which would provide them with names of expert witnesses when they are studying a piece of legislation. It would also allow committee Members to vote in a more enlightened way and perhaps recognize and implement amendments that might otherwise be missed. Such a Bill as I am suggesting would allow for a more organized, efficient and effective approach to the taking of the national pulse on any given issue.

If Parliament takes to heart the recommendations for parliamentary reform, they will find it has been suggested that committees be given responsibility for overseeing operations of relevant Government departments. At present our committees do not have the responsibility for overview and scrutiny that United States committees have.

The question is, should our committees take on such a responsibility? If this is so, it is all the more important for a given committee to be in a position to identify on an ongoing basis those individuals or groups outside the bureaucracy whose representations may be relevant. Lobbyists would clearly have access to specialized interest groups.

In his speech in the House of Commons the Hon. Member for Grenville-Carleton, as the constituency was then called, had this to say on January 28, 1977 as reported at page 2515 of *Hansard*:

—the direction in which our parliamentary system should be evolving—toward a more open Government with a more influential House of Commons—leads me to believe that we should begin now to establish a framework for the operation of lobbyists before any serious problems develop.

I subscribe to that statement. It is as relevant today as it was then. We are now in the process of seriously examining our parliamentary system. Perhaps now is a good time for renewed interest in such matters as registration of lobbyists. Lobbyists are able to provide legislators with feedback on the actual operation of Government programs in the field. As we already know there is usually a discrepancy between bureaucratic theory and the practical application of Government programs. The sooner the Government is able to gain insight into the effects of any given program, the sooner it will be able to act upon that information.

● (1720)

As we all know, many large associations and organizations have taken offices in Ottawa for the specific purpose of lobbying. The biggest of them, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, the Canadian Labour Congress, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, the Medical Association, and there are numerous others well known already, present their briefs and publicize their views before each federal budget. They also maintain year-round contacts with civil servants and also members of Parliament who may be working on legislation

which affects them. The survival of any organization which claims to effectively represent its members depends on its ability to persuade the power holders to recognize them as a legitimate representative agent. Interest groups have developed links with the existing political and social structure to ensure the protection of their interests and also to keep open the direct lines to the Government.

It is my contention, Mr. Speaker, that it is essential that lobbyists register. It would clarify their situation as well as give a clear understanding of which groups are legitimate and which most fairly represent the interests of the public as a whole. I would like it to be understood that I am not suggesting we restrict lobbying, paid or otherwise, or in any way interfere with the right of the public to make representations to Members of the Senate or the House of Commons. Rather, I am suggesting that lobbyists should be registered and we should know on whose behalf they are acting and making representations.

Under this Bill, the Clerk of the House will be responsible for maintaining a registry of lobbyists. This registry will be accessible to any Senator, Member of Parliament, and accredited member of the Parliamentary Press Gallery. Each lobbyist shall be issued an identification card. In this way we could maintain an ongoing list of those groups and individuals within the lobbying system, and at the same time ensure a level of security which will be advantageous to the House of Commons as well as to the public.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that, since this matter has been before the House of Commons on so many occasions, and since there has been so much concern and deliberation and debate on the matter, it should be sent to the appropriate committee for further consideration, and I would so recommend.

**Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my rather short speech this afternoon by saying to the Hon. Member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore (Mr. Robinson) that I am extremely grateful to him for his very kind references to Bills I have had on the Order Paper on other occasions with respect to this matter. If you read his Bill and my Bills C-432 and C-214 in prior sessions of Parliament, you will see that they are virtually the same, so we are *ad idem*. I would have seconded the introduction of his Bill, Mr. Speaker, if you had cast your eye my way. I do not fault you for casting it the other way, but I want to say that because I think it is important. I would also like to suggest that the penalty section of his Bill, which does go beyond mine, I feel is a worthy addition to the Bill and something which the committee should be able to discuss.

I am particularly grateful that I am able to respond to his very generous speech, both with respect to the subject matter and to me, personally. I would like to respond in kind and inform the House that the Hon. Member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore joined my colleagues, the Hon. Member for York-Sunbury (Mr. Howie), the Hon. Member for Vancouver South