

Government Orders

where the individual has undertaken to communicate with a public office holder in an attempt to influence any matter described in subparagraphs 1(a)(i) to (vi), particulars to identify any communication technique that the individual has used or expects to use in an attempt to influence that matter;

That is a central point in the legislation and I say that from experience in the past Parliament. Often in the past we were not aware of the various techniques used by lobbyists. What are some of those techniques?

First, let us take the drug patent legislation as an example. That is a bill by which members can see the full force of a lobby at work. The organization of brand name manufacturers not only had very good lobbyists but used polling companies. It used advertising. It used print. It used the media. If we were not really sensitive to the total package or the comprehensive communication strategy they were using, we could be very susceptible to their particular lobby or their particular point of view.

Often in the House of Commons we are susceptible to polls because we have been conditioned as politicians to look at polls to find out what people are thinking. In the past we have seen lobbyists designing polls and using polls to create a sense that the public was supporting the presentation they were making to us on a particular issue. That is where we have to keep our heads up.

Mr. Speaker, you are a veteran of the Hill; you have been here for many years. You have seen these various techniques employed. The bill states that the technique lobbyists are using, whether it be print media or polling, the total package of how they will try to shift our attitude toward redrafting a piece of legislation, has to be on the table. Their operation has to be transparent in the way it comes at us. That is a key component of the legislation. It will help us make better laws for the people of Canada.

The Minister of Industry made another very important point in his speech: Canadians do not have to pay to talk to their members of Parliament. Millions of people would probably be shocked at the very thought of having to pay to speak to their members of Parliament.

The member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca alluded to the fact that during the last 10 years the sector of the economy that grew the most in this town was the lobby sector. I do not know what the percentage increase was, but it outstripped every other sector in terms of growth in this city. An impression was created that if we really wanted to get something done in Ottawa we had to go through a lobbyist. It made members of Parliament seem irrelevant.

• (1045)

I remember being in opposition and feeling the frustration. When I would run into constituents flying back to Toronto or in a restaurant or doing something in town here, I would say: "What are you doing here?" They would say: "Well, I'm with my lobbyist trying to get something done". I would ask: "What do you mean you are with your lobbyist? Why wouldn't you just come around? This is what we as members of Parliament are

here for. This is what we are here to help you with. You don't have to pay a lobbyist".

If we are talking about a piece of complex policy where they want to get some ultra-sophisticated advice on how one might advance a very complex issue, fine, there are some good professional policy people out there who can help. But you never have to pay to get access to your member of Parliament.

In dealing with this legislation in the first part of our mandate in a comprehensive way, we are not only going to help our constituents, whether they be from a social agency or a business, but we will also be reinvigorating the role of members of Parliament.

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Industry through this legislation will make our role as members of Parliament much more meaningful than it has been in the last 10 years. In the previous 10 years it is a well known fact that if one had a really good lobbyist who could get to the eight or ten key people who were basically administering the government, one had a pretty good chance of getting one's issue on the front burner.

The Prime Minister is saying with his comprehensive ethics package: "Work with your members of Parliament. They're here. They're working for you". We are not trying to put lobbyists out of business, but we are trying to put the role and the responsibility of members of Parliament back to where it once was.

[Translation]

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert): Mr. Speaker, the proposed legislation to amend the Lobbyists Registration Act gives us a chance to reflect on the state of our democracy. Since the Berlin wall came down and the Soviet empire was dismantled, we have seen some major attempts at democratization, by countries which for decades had lived under the yoke of a totalitarian state.

Against this background, we are sometimes tempted to idealize our own political system and give it virtues that do not, however, stand up to close scrutiny. There are also those who, rather simplistically, tend to confuse democracy with universal suffrage. I do not deny the fact that the electoral process is ultimately a symbol of democracy, but, with Alexis de Tocqueville, I want to point out that democracy means far more.

During the last federal election campaign, the Liberal Party announced it would work on enhancing the credibility of parliamentarians and wanted to give them a code of ethics. So what happened? Since the beginning of the 35th Parliament, the government has repeatedly done the exact opposite of what it pledged to do.

A few examples. Before the Standing Committee on Human Resources had even started its consultations and studies on the reform of health and social security programs, the government announced in its February 22 budget, without involving parliamentarians or the Canadian public, a number of draconian cuts in unemployment insurance totalling more than \$5 billion. Did the government receive a democratic mandate from the people, in this case?