

length with these proposals. They are very wide ranging and they cover many aspects of our parliamentary life, of our association with the business community and with the world of commerce. I intend to be very general in my approach, bearing in mind that there will be an opportunity in the course of the committee studies to go into detail and make recommendations. I am glad the government has recognized the difference between the public approach and the special approach, and the fact that members of parliament are also members of the public and are entitled to the same benefits as are members of the public generally. We, too, pass the age of 65 and become entitled to certain benefits. We borrow money from the Farm Credit Corporation; we sell grain to the Canadian Wheat Board, and sometimes we even have children and become entitled to the family allowance, then becoming clients of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde). I think the government, in making that distinction, has been quite wise.

● (1420)

With regard to the suggested limitation of 5 per cent, I think this will be a matter for consideration and discussion, and I will not deal with it in any greater detail now.

On the question of disclosure and the suggestion that in addition to disclosures which must be made in the sense that there must be registration there is this disclosure required to be made in this House, I think this is good. If a member of this House or the Senate has holdings which fall within the allowable limit, and I think this is probably the intention of the government as enunciated in its green paper, I still think the member should make full and adequate disclosure of his interest. Having made such a full disclosure, the hon. member of this or the other place can then become an advocate in the House with the freedom that disclosure has given. There may be some problems about the details of disclosures during the question period. I think this might present some difficulties for Your Honour. An hon. member, before asking a question, might say he has so many shares in such and such a company, but less than 5 per cent, and in spite of that fact he wants to ask a question. These are only practical difficulties which I am sure this House, with its good sense, will be able to overcome.

The exemptions to be permitted to be given by the House probably represent a wise move, but whether that right should be extended to a committee of the House is something I should like to consider very carefully. Whether a committee of the House should have the same authority as the House in granting exemptions is something else.

Having regard to Crown corporations, from a perfunctory reading of this green paper I am not certain whether they will be included in this prohibition in relation to government contracts and money, but I assume that is the idea and that legislation will follow accordingly. There is also the question of future benefits. To what extent would a member of the House, having participated and having been a strong advocate in a certain position, be entitled at a later stage to accept future benefits, once the specified time had elapsed and after the legislation had been enacted?

Conflict of Interest

We all know the situation in the United States where high-ranking officers in the Pentagon went on, after their service in that institution, to become executive officials to some very large corporations with which that government had been doing business, and we know the problems that were created. This is an issue we will want to look at very closely. After a member ceases to be a member of this House or the other place, to what extent would he or she be entitled to take advantage of the advocacy which took place in this House in respect of certain issues? I do not intend to go beyond that question, but I hope we can give full effect to the bona fide intentions of the government. We must remember that it is not only what we say that is important but also what we do.

I think we must work out methods by which there can be the fullest possible inquiry into any of these issues, and whether this is done by a committee of the House or through another form of inquiry is unimportant. I think I am entitled to say to this government that its conduct in the last few weeks in respect of this legislation in relation to the granting of full inquiries into certain actions that have been brought to the attention of the House and the government warrant us filing a caveat by suggesting that when the legislation or the proposals come up for discussion, any proposal, any legislation or any change in the standing orders which does not provide for or in any way inhibits the fullest inquiry when problems do arise will not be satisfactory to this party.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, the green book tabled today by the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) is a very important document, and I thank the minister for having supplied us with it as well as a copy of his statement at least an hour ago. The subject is one that is of basic concern to the proper functioning of a political democracy. I hope the government, having come to this point and having introduced this interesting and valuable paper, will make it possible for parliament to pursue this matter, take the necessary legislative steps and also change the rules as suggested in the document now before us.

It has been said by more than one prominent Canadian that public representatives and elected persons have the right to be regarded as honourable men and women. I am sure all of us in this House agree with that pronouncement. It is also true, however, that the public has the right to be sure, and it is for that reason that legislative steps must be taken and rules and regulations must be laid down. In the brief time I have had to peruse the green paper I think I can say it does cover the subject very well. It poses the problems and makes suggestions that would come to grips with the situation. However, Sir, there are a few comments I should like to make.

My comments relate to points which I think should be included in this matter right from the start. In the first place I find in the green paper far too many uses of the words "exception", "exemption", "relief" and "dispensation". Those four words occur again and again. Rules are laid down covering what members of this House and of the Senate must do, but then so as not to interfere unduly with the work of a member or Senator this exemption might be given or that dispensation might be granted. I