

ment and he did the honourable thing. We have the example of another Liberal Member who is involved in a tax trial, the Member for Burin-St. Georges (Mr. Simmons). We do not see him resigning his seat.

If you are involved in a tax trial, Mr. Speaker, you could be guilty. It is time consuming. You are going to have to spend time in court, with your lawyers and so forth. You are certainly not going to be able to fulfill your duties properly as a Member of Parliament. It was certainly refreshing to see someone with that sense of honour in the House setting an example for other Members. I was very pleased to see that a number of the media editorialized on this saying that it was an honourable day when we finally saw a Member resigning when he had a conflict of interest rather than hanging on as a person who has no shame whatsoever would do.

I hope that Government Members do not intend to talk this Bill out. It has a lot of merit. There have certainly been enough examples over the years to show why we need stricter guidelines and laws to deal with conflicts of interest after what we have observed many Members on the Liberal side doing over the past years.

Mr. Lyle S. Kristiansen (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise very briefly to speak and give general support to Bill C-208, an Act to provide for the control of conflicts of interests in Government affairs. The explanatory notes states:

The purpose of this bill is to ameliorate the control of conflicts of interest by Cabinet ministers and officers and employees of the Government of Canada by defining the circumstances under which a conflict of interest is deemed to arise and by providing a method of enforcement through the Deputy Registrar General and the Federal Court of Canada.

I do not intend to discuss this at length, but we have had a number of examples during the last year which have been referred to by the author of the Bill, which have demonstrated at least some inadequacies with the current informal guidelines as to the code of behaviour. I do not want to say anything more than that. However, I believe that there has been, amongst the public and many of the media, as well as Members on both sides of the House, some feeling that those informal guidelines are, at best, rather inadequate.

In earlier months some reference has been made by Members on the other side to the fact that after all these are only guidelines. At least one of the debates we had in the House on one of the subjects referred to, I believe it was the Coalgate affair, was enough to cause many of us to think we needed something that codified the area of conflict of interest a little more carefully and succinctly.

There may be some problems with the definition as proposed in Bill C-208 itself. My colleagues and I have no objection to the Bill and are interested in seeing it receive consideration in the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections. We are pleased to give our support to take it at least that far.

There is one possible problem which I can see. We should take some care, for example, with respect to some new concepts of management which have been referred to even in the Throne Speech. For example, these involve labour representa-

tion on boards of directors and the concept of worker directors, which has been explored and experimented with in some jurisdictions across the country, particularly with regard to Crown corporations. This idea is in its infancy. I would be careful about Clause 3 which states:

● (1750)

(1) For purposes of this Act, a conflict of interest in relation to Government affairs shall be deemed to occur when any of the following circumstances exists:

(a) when an employee or official of the Government or of a Government agency seeks, holds, enjoys, undertakes or executes any contract, agreement or arrangement of any kind with the Government, any Government agency or Government officer for valuable consideration, or supplies or provides any goods, services, work or matter of any kind to the Government or a Government agency or a Government officer for valuable consideration.

It may be that such a clause, if presented without some caveat elsewhere in the Bill, might prevent us from exploring some of the new concepts in industrial relations which are being given some consideration. With that consideration, and there may certainly be others, I would like to see the Bill go to committee now so we could give some attention to that area just to ensure that we do not kill the possibility of an idea before it has been further explored.

With that comment, I am pleased to support the thrust of the Bill and I congratulate the Member for introducing it. I hope that by speaking briefly I can assist in seeing that it does get some further consideration.

Mr. John Evans (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely interested in rising to speak to this particular Bill. I had a good deal of material that I wanted to go through.

The Hon. Member for Kootenay West (Mr. Kristiansen) just raised a rather interesting point. I think the Bill is so seriously flawed that there is no way we should send it to committee until it has been reconsidered by its author.

Let me give some examples. I am a Member who represents a large number of public servants. Probably 50 per cent of the people in my riding are public servants and a higher proportion are the families of public servants. The Hon. Member for Kootenay West just referred to Clause 3 of the Bill which states:

For purposes of this Act, a conflict of interest in relation to Government affairs shall be deemed to occur when any of the following circumstances exist:

The Hon. Member just read Clause 3(1)(a). Let me read Clause 3(1)(b), which reads:

(b) when an employee or official of the Government or of a Government agency sells, transfers, conveys, leases or otherwise disposes of any property or interest in property to the Government or a Government agency or a Government officer;

I can think of some situations where this would arise, especially in Ottawa where we have increased the presence of the federal Government. Let us suppose that a public servant owns some land in Ottawa or on the outskirts of Ottawa and the federal Government indicates its desire to build a federal office building there. It indicates to the individual that it wants to purchase that land. If the federal public servant sells the