

*Lobbyists Registration Act*

was lobbying the Government? Who were they contacting in the Government? How much were they spending in that massive lobbying effort?

I want to note in brackets, so to speak, an article that I read in the paper the other day, dealing with the same subject. It concerned another country, Mexico. The Americans and the American pharmaceutical industry was laying a heavy trip on Mexico in the same area, saying: "Don't you dare do anything that will interfere with the operations of the pharmaceutical industry. Don't do anything that would impede their capacity to set whatever price they want to set for any drug that they should bring on the market".

The importance of that issue is not limited to Canada. It also has implications for the whole continent, and I would suggest the western world as well. Would it not have been useful if we had known how much money was being spent on lobbying when it came to the whole question of the generic drug industry? It is particularly useful to know those costs, because the public opinion polls showed that the public was in favour of the generic drug legislation on the books of this country. It raised a question about the Government's use of a popular piece of legislation that was saving Canadians money, a piece of legislation that was making sure that miracle drugs could be available to people at a reasonable cost. Why would a Government scuttle such legislation? Why would a Government tear the guts out of such legislation? That raises questions.

People must suspect that some pretty powerful interests have been leaning on the Government. There must have been some pretty effective lobbyists seeking to change the mind of this Government, seeking to push the Government in the direction of scuttling this legislation. We would like to know how much they spent on those efforts. Those Canadians who fought to preserve the legislation we had, which was unique in the world, had a right and a desire to know just what they were up against when they were fighting for its preservation, what kind of powerful interests were involved, and how much did they have to take off? That is one comment with regard to the whole inadequacy of this legislation, from the point of view of the information that it provides.

The reason that I am looking at this legislation is that people who have spoken before me have come to the conclusion—or at least their comments have lead me to that conclusion—that this legislation is not really intended to do anything effective about lobbying in Canada and that in fact it is window-dressing.

Let us look at what kind of information the legislation provides for Canadians. It does not provide—and it would be useful for us to know what was going on in any particular lobbying effort—is who is being paid to organize mass mailings.

• (1640)

Who is being paid to manage advertising campaigns directed at influencing government policy? As Members of Parliament we get enormous amounts of mail. We get so much that this House has seen it necessary to assign staff to individual Members of Parliament. In other jurisdictions, such as in Britain, Members of Parliament, for all practical purposes, do their own work. They answer their own mail; they write their own letters. In this country, because of the massive amount of written communication that we receive, we have found it necessary to hire staff, at least three paid employees in the offices of Members of Parliament, to assist in answering the mail. It would be interesting to know how much of that mail is an expression of the spontaneous opinion of ordinary Canadians; how much of it is a direct expression of grass roots democracy; how much of it is a real expression of public opinion and, on the other hand, how much of it is manufactured, how much of it is manipulated, and how much of it is self-serving.

It would have been useful in the generic drug debate for Members of Parliament to know whether the mail being received was something which had been arranged by a lobbyist. Did some lobbyists in Toronto, Ottawa, or Sudbury arrange for people to send in letters to Members of Parliament that called for the scuttling of the legislation, or was it a spontaneous expression? Information requiring the disclosure of names of those who are paid to organize mass mailings and who are paid to manage advertising campaigns would have thrown some light on the situation.

You might ask me, Mr. Speaker: Is it really practical for Governments to monitor all the activities of lobbyists? I must say that I do not know. It has not been done in this country yet. If we are going to bring forward legislation to register lobbyists, to give the public the feeling that we are keeping an eye on them, the legislation ought to be effective. We ought not to undertake legislative activities which are meaningless or simply window dressing.

I want to take a further indepth look, another peak, at the legislation to confirm if the conclusion that we have come to, namely, that this legislation is toothless and is simply a sop to public opinion rather than meant to control lobbyists. Another aspect of lobbying about which we have been informed is something called mapping. Apparently if you want to get something done in this city, you have to know more than a Member of Parliament, and more than just the House of Commons.

There are large government Departments in Ottawa. There are thousands of government employees. There are many managers and there are various kinds of central agencies through which the Government controls itself. Lobbyists are able to map out the way to get to the centre of power. If you have enough bucks to pay them, if you can afford the time and energy of these people who have learned to walk the maze of government decision making, you can get to the centre of