

legislation to prevent this sort of development from taking place. It chose not to act. The bill is mute. As a result, while the bill is a significant forward in a number of areas, I think there is a serious deficiency in it. I think Parliament should be called upon to improve the bill and to do away with the deficiency without further delay.

**Mr. Bill Yurko (Edmonton East):** Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure for me to make a few comments on Bill C-43 at the third reading stage. I want first of all to congratulate all those who have been responsible for bringing this bill before the House with the intent of passing it during this session.

I particularly want to congratulate a person who is not in the House today and has not been for a couple of years. In the fall of 1967 I returned from Arizona to Edmonton with some interest in political matters. A political meeting was advertised to be held at the MacDonald Hotel in the latter part of September, 1967. It was stated that a fellow by the name of Ged Baldwin would be speaking at this meeting and that someone by the strange name of Dalton Camp would also be there. I decided to attend that meeting because I was interested particularly in what one of those people had to say, that person being a Member of Parliament from northern Alberta representing the region of Peace River. I went to that meeting and heard a very eloquent speech given by the Hon. Ged Baldwin on the need for open government and access to information in government.

Having worked for some time in the United States and having experienced the difficulty a person in the engineering world experiences in getting information from government, that speech impressed me very much and, indeed, helped me in my subsequent years in politics to a very great degree.

I should say that the other fellow who spoke at that meeting did not overly impress me with what he said because he did not say very much at that time. However, Mr. Baldwin impressed upon me the need for open government and access to information to such a degree that when I became minister of the environment in the province of Alberta, which was a whole new area, we declared as a policy that all environmental information was public information. We followed that policy implicitly for the four years I was minister. We brought information into the legislature by the wheelbarrow load. Everything was public, and that had several effects. The first was that suddenly the news media and the people trusted the government fully in that area. They knew we were not hiding anything and that we would table everything. Whether it was derogatory to a company or a government, we simply put it on the table. As a government, we became trusted in that area.

The second strange thing was the effect on the news media. Up until that time, if there was a rumour that a document was being held secret, that became the issue. The issue was that something was being held secret and away from the eyes of the public. An interesting development happened in environmental matters. When we started to table everything and bring everything forward, it was not "newsy" any more. It was news only when there was a suspicion that something was being held under the table or confidential, and the news media would play it up to the nth degree. Indeed, information was brought

forward without any difficulty. It served a very useful purpose. There was demand for this information from companies and from local levels of government, and it was provided without any difficulty whatsoever. It was a pity the same policy was not followed in other departments in the province of Alberta or that we did not bring forward a freedom of information act, because we should have, seeing it was an Albertan who worked so hard at the national level to get such a bill into the House of Commons. I might also say that I was very impressed with Mr. Baldwin's role.

● (1710)

Personally, I feel very strongly that the correspondence of ministers should also be made public, although I know that is a very sensitive issue. I spent seven years as a minister in the provincial government of Alberta and when I quit I gave all my correspondence to the archives of Alberta to be made public when they felt it was appropriate or when I gave permission to do so. I believe that cabinet documents and ministerial correspondence should be made public soon after a government is defeated or a minister leaves office. Such correspondence is pertinent to the political life and the growth of a nation.

I believe that this bill, although it is important and an excellent start, should go further. I fully support it. This is a good, sound initiative. In closing, again I wish to give credit to Mr. Ged Baldwin for all the work he did on this subject during the years.

**Mr. Jack Masters (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications):** Mr. Speaker, I too rise in this House with a feeling of pride today. This has been a very busy Parliament and it has handled some very important pieces of legislation, but this is one of the most important. I am proud to have had some small part in it through my membership on the committee.

This work is rather new to me, Mr. Speaker, but I have enjoyed it. As a Canadian citizen I have always been interested in access to information and seeing that the rights of the individual are protected at the same time. As a former member of the media, I know how important it is that information be available and I applaud the government and all members of the House for their part in bringing forth this important piece of legislation.

The bill tries to put in place a mechanism that will ensure access to information which should be properly available to us. Obviously some information, for one reason or another, cannot be accessible. In this electronic age it is most important that privacy be assured as well. This bill incorporates accessibility to information and ensures the right of the individual to privacy without impeding law enforcement or jeopardizing the common good.

As a non-legal member of the committee, I was intrigued by the intricacies of the bill. Access to information and right to privacy are matters that have been discussed for a long time. I