

Public Service Publications

Anyway, though I might be mistaken, Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that nothing is being said on the matter, that everything is being kept secret, that they will not reveal the nature of these expenses, the number of hirings and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, I would rather be proven wrong and then the hon. member for Laurier will show the need for that bill, thereby avoiding confusion across the country and the doubts one might justifiably entertain since this involves the taxpayer's money. It stands to reason that such information should be supplied.

May I remind him that in today's newspaper *La Presse* it was stated that the booklet "How your tax dollar is spent" has a pre-election flavour, that it hides and interprets some public expenses such as, for instance, the interest on the public debt. The government members find that funny, but the chapters concerning the moneys we contribute to service the public debt are skipped. The chapter on the role of Parliament is also skipped and the facts are being interpreted in favour of the government. However, the booklet "How your tax money is spent", in which readers find publicity for the government and an apology for its policy, has cost \$72,625 to the taxpayers. According to the information provided in *La Presse*, over 528,000 copies of that publication were distributed through government agencies.

Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that if on the one hand the government deems it necessary to tell people how their tax money is spent—and on that point, I am in full agreement—I consider on the other hand that hon. members should also have the privilege of being told how some moneys have been spent at the level of departmental management.

Mr. Speaker, before concluding these short remarks, I should like to tell one thing to the hon. member for Laurier, who has not yet learned about the tolerant standards of this Parliament. I would remind him that counting the number of members in the House is absolutely ridiculous. I would tell him that if I wanted—and I will not do it, Mr. Speaker—to point out the lack of quorum his whip and his party would be in a rather bad situation. There are only 12 Liberal members in the House. If we wanted to count the number of members here tonight it would show how low we have reached.

However, one thing is for sure: The *créditistes* members present in the House are prepared to work. We are supporting Bill C-19 because we want to know what the government is doing with the taxpayers' money.

If the government has nothing to hide about its expenditures to Parliament and the people then why is it against this legislation? If the government is convinced that departmental expenditures are legitimate why is it trying to hide these public expenditures?

Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks with this, hoping that this bill will pass.

Mr. Leblanc (Laurier): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): The hon. member for Laurier on a point of order.

Mr. Leblanc (Laurier): Mr. Speaker, I have been attacked by the hon. member who just had the floor. Actually, he referred to an article published in *La Presse*

[Mr. Fortin.]

and dealing with a document entitled "How your tax dollar is spent". He called it an electoral document. Now, if he goes back to page B 9 of *La Presse*, he will see that there is no question whatsoever of an electoral document—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. I would ask the hon. member for Laurier to resume his seat. I must point out to him that the question he is raising is essentially argumentative and according to the House Rules it does not meet the requirements of a question of privilege or a point of order.

[English]

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of Bill C-19, proposed by the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow), is to provide information to the public on contracts of employment entered into by the office of the Prime Minister or by government departments. As such, it seems a rather innocuous bill. I am sure there is a great deal of interest in the Prime Minister's staff and surely it would not be a big problem to administer this bill if it were passed. However, the difficulty would be in administering the bill in so far as it extends to something like 230,000 civil servants in government departments. Also, I presume CNR employees and others would be affected by it.

The hon. member wants information about people working under contract in the Prime Minister's office; he wants to know their names, their specific duties and how much they are paid for the services they render to the government. Surely this information would be of interest to many people. However, it seemed to me the hon. member weakened his argument when he talked about placing questions on the order paper. Many of us place all kinds of questions on the order paper relating to public policy and matters on which we feel there should be public information. I do this with respect to my own riding. Sometimes it is quicker to get information in this way rather than contacting a minister directly, particularly if the subject matter is of a continuing nature extending over a number of years.

If the bill covered only staff in the Prime Minister's office it could be of great value, but the hon. member weakened his argument by saying the information was given to him. I believe another hon. member also said he asked for information along the same lines, and got it.

Mr. Orlikow: A year late.

Mr. Foster: When he thought it was not adequate, he simply phoned the Prime Minister's office and received additional information. Perhaps if the hon. member for Winnipeg North had simply phoned the Prime Minister's office in the first instance he would have received all the information he seeks. The problem with this bill is that it seems to reach out to include all other contracts; for instance, those issued under the Local Initiatives Program and the Opportunities for Youth program.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. The hour appointed for the consideration of private members' business having expired, I do now leave the chair until eight o'clock.

At six o'clock the House took recess.