

*Government Orders*

office holders, namely ministers and senior public servants; also, its intention to establish a code of ethics for lobbyists.

I personally feel it is entirely appropriate that the Ethics Counsellor be responsible for administering these three codes of ethics. This will eliminate the scattering of responsibilities. I do feel, however, that there are a number of shortcomings in the bill. First of all, the Ethics Counsellor will not be appointed by and accountable to Parliament, but rather by the Governor in Council.

While the Ethics Counsellor is required to present an annual report to Parliament, and while Parliament must periodically review this legislation, the fact remains that, because he is appointed by the Governor in Council—therefore by Cabinet and the Prime Minister—it is difficult to establish a clear administrative link and reporting relationship; in my opinion, this is all the more incongruous in that the registrar will continue to report to the Department of Industry. I think we should ask why the Ethics Counsellor is appointed by the Governor in Council, therefore, by the Prime Minister. If we want the Ethics Counsellor to be entirely credible and as unbiased as possible for this work, which would include dealing with possible conflicts of interest involving Cabinet members, I think this appointment should not be made by the Governor-in-Council, representing the wishes of Cabinet, but rather by Parliament itself.

According to the red book, and I quote, “the Ethics Counsellor will be appointed after consultation with the leaders of all parties in the House of Commons”.

I cannot deny that the Leader of the Official Opposition and the leader of the Reform Party were informed of Mr. Wilson’s appointment, and I do not deny that we are entirely in favour of this appointment, as I noted earlier. But, given the measures provided for in this bill, we must wonder about the attitude subsequent governments might take. Would subsequent governments pay just as much attention to the opposition’s point of view on the appointment of an ethics counsellor? This is what we are questioning with respect to the prospect of designation by the Governor in Council.

We must also deplore the fact that the distinction between the two types of lobbyists is maintained. I will, with your permission, refer again to the red book that has been quoted so many times since the beginning of this session because, of course, the government boasts about this process of transparency in parliamentary and government institutions it will undertake in order to restore public trust in our parliamentary institutions and our government.

So the red book says, among other things, and I quote: “To increase the transparency of the government’s relations with lobbyists, and to give effect to some of the measures described here, a Liberal government will implement the unanimous June 1993 report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on

Consumer and Corporate Affairs respecting the Lobbyists Registration Act”.

Well, the first recommendation of the Holtmann report suggests that, and I quote “The distinction between Tier I and Tier II lobbyists be eliminated”. But it is maintained. How do you explain that a lobbyist working for a large corporation can have two months to file a return while consultant lobbyists have only ten days? What is the basis for such different treatment?

• (1350)

We should not differentiate on the basis of status, but rather according to the type of activity. Someone who plays the piano is a pianist; someone who lobbies is a lobbyist. Whatever status they have, all lobbyists perform the same activity and we should not keep this artificial difference.

I also believe that we should have done away with the fiscal exemptions for lobbying expenses, something which, by the way, was suggested by the Minister of Transport. These exemptions mean that the government is subsidizing the work undertaken by private interests to influence the decision-making process.

I believe that direct referral to committee, which virtually does away with second reading, something we regret a little, has a positive aspect in that it allows members to voice their opinion on the principle of the bill. In committee, the Bloc Québécois will try to prevent this bill from becoming an empty shell, a mere cosmetic operation. The Bloc Québécois will co-operate with the government, but it also expects the government to be open and receptive to the constructive suggestions that might be made by the various political parties in the House.

[English]

**Mr. John Bryden (Hamilton—Wentworth):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to speak to this motion to send Bill C-43 to committee.

I cannot think of a type of legislation that is more important to all members of the House of Commons. I like to think that this is the kind of thing I was sent by the people in my riding, to do in the House.

I took notes of two things as this debate progressed. One is the tremendous co-operation that has been shown by members of the opposition parties to examine this bill very candidly and to look for ways to improve the bill and to find deficiencies. I also took note of the minister’s statement this morning that he is willing to entertain any kind of bona fide, progressive suggestion, any kind of amendment.

I do have something I would like to add to this bill as an amendment. It has to do with a subject that is of great interest to me and to other members of the House and that is special interest groups.