

Government Orders

Another point to be made is that government funding for lobby groups and special interest groups must stop. That is something we have continued to put forth as a party in the House and in the public for a long time. We believe it is very unfair for the public to be funding a special lobby group, a special interest group, that in many cases does not represent the true interests of the silent majority most of the time. I implore the government to take heed of this point. We have raised it before in the House. I also implore all government officials, particularly those of us who are new at the job, to be very wary of these groups.

One of the most difficult things I have found since being here is how to get to the truth of the matter, how to find out what the true answers are, what the people want and what the real problem is in definition. We are all in our offices subjected to large numbers of people from different groups who are giving us various points of view. Sometimes when we sit there listening to them we can be convinced that they represent the will of the people.

Being a sceptical individual I find it very difficult to believe that many individuals truly represent the truth, truly represent what our constituents want or truly represent the wishes of the silent majority. I would ask all of us in the House to be wary of that and try to continually ask ourselves what the majority of Canadian people feel about a specific issue. It is not an easy thing to do. It will be a continual battle for all of us to try to answer during our tenure.

I also implore members of the public to influence us where they can. We do not as a group want to be influenced by special interest groups. We need the influence of the silent majority in order to effectively represent the wishes of the majority of the people in the country. Only by the Canadian public coming to us to tell us what the average person on the street wants can we effectively and truly represent their wishes and do the best job we can.

I make an open plea to members of the Canadian public, if they are feeling apathetic, to try to influence us, to write to us and to give their wishes and views on what they want us to do here. That is the only way we can be forceful in terms of wishes. We are only as good as the constituents who influence us.

It is wise to summarize by looking at the underlying principles of the current legislation we want to promote such as openness. Records on paid lobbyists should be available publicly. There should be clarity to reinforce the principle of openness. There should be access to government by all people, not only lobbyist groups. The people on the street must have access to us freely, as the minister mentioned before. They must take advantage of that in a democratic society such as we have in the country. Not every country in the world has given the power to the people to do that. We are one of the few countries to have it.

I implore the people of Canada to come out and exercise their right to do so.

• (1035)

We have a credo in our party. I ask all members of the House to please listen. We believe in the common sense of the people, their right to be consulted on public policy matters before major decisions are made, their right to govern themselves through truly representative and responsible institutions, and their right to directly initiate legislation for which substantial public support is demonstrated.

I hope the government will listen carefully, use them as guiding principles in its legislative efforts and institute and support efforts to democratize the system this party has presented, which I know many people in the House support.

Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry): Mr. Speaker, I begin by saying that the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca has raised a couple of very good points in terms of possible amendments.

The point he raised about government funding lobbyists is something we have to review. Many members find it strange that we fund heavily many lobbyists. In many cases the government funds them to constantly criticize even the good things governments are doing. Therefore, as the bill proceeds to committee, I know that part of it will be subjected to some good and rigorous exchanges in debate.

I also congratulate the Prime Minister and the Minister of Industry for taking the necessary time to bring before the House a comprehensive package. Often in our haste we could have maybe had the Lobbyists Registration Act amended and it might not have met the total test. By having a comprehensive package which includes an ethics counsellor, the Prime Minister has sensitized all of us who are public office holders and the entire machinery of government, as well as outside lobbyists. We will do our best to make sure the process of rebuilding trust is one that involves a constant, high profile, highly respected public servant who will keep us all alert to what tends to be the temptations to which the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca alluded.

Many people come into our offices at times. Sometimes it is difficult to judge where the real truth comes from. It is so easy in this game because sometimes the presentations to us as members of Parliament are so sophisticated and well organized that we end up buying in to some of the policies thrown at us. This will put a very vigorous discipline on us to make sure we get to the bottom of all information presented to us.

• (1040)

I would like to highlight subclause 5(2)(i) which reads: