

Canada Elections Act

Member of Parliament. Over the years I have been amazed at how little understanding the business community has of the workings of Parliament and of Government and how much wasted effort there is as it seeks to influence Parliament in one way or another for what that sector deems is good for it. What I say about business would apply to industrial workers, to organized labour and to professional organizations.

I believe that there needs to be a greater linkage between the real community and the parliamentary process. The British have come to recognize this. It is not exactly the granting of a leave of absence by various sectors. It points to the need to establish a linkage between the work of Parliament, the work of Government and the greater community beyond these precincts. I am arguing, Mr. Speaker, that that linkage could be forged if we allowed more people in greater varieties of occupations and callings to come here. There is another way in which it could be done as well.

In 1977 in Great Britain a trust was established known as the Industry and Parliament Trust. This trust offers to Members of Parliament of both Houses and all Parties an opportunity to gain direct experience of business by spending up to five weeks learning firsthand how a business operates, how Government impinges on a business and with what effect, and how labour relates to that company. The aim has been to help legislators to judge better the effect of possible actions by Government and to help them make better choices among alternative ways to pursuing the Government's purposes. You will be interested, Mr. Speaker, that within the first five years of that program, over 125 British Members of Parliament had completed a program with one of the participating companies. The acceptance of the program has been so great that there are now similar programs in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands and France.

If the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt were allowed to have this amendment adopted, he would be following that same basic principle, that is, the linkage, let me call it, between the real world and the parliamentary world, and the parliamentary world would be immeasurably strengthened and improved.

Let me throw in a personal note. I worked for a school board at the time I sought election that was generous enough to do exactly what the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt is proposing. I had not realized what the situation was at the time and it never even occurred to me until after I won the nomination for my Party and then returned to my job for the remaining months before the election and met a dear and delightful colleague, now deceased, who made the comment to me and said: "How can you possibly do what you are doing?" I was puzzled by her question. She said: "You are going out at the end of a limb and you are inviting your fellow citizens to saw off that limb, and then where are you?" Reality then set in. I established contact with the chairman of the school board and inquired about a leave of absence. It was granted, and it was granted on a second occasion in 1972. The curtain was drawn after that, and that was fine. If it can be done in that particular profession, why can we not extend this, first of all, by way of law? If it is established by way of law, then it can be

established by way of example to involve and incorporate other members of society in other walks of life.

My Party would like to see this Bill go to committee for further study and analysis and to have other witnesses from the community express views on it.

Mr. Doug Lewis (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to make a contribution to this debate and to outline some of the other viewpoints that might be taken with respect to the question of whether or not one's job should be left open *ad infinitum*—some might say *ad nauseam*—while one serves in this House.

First, I could not agree more with my friend, the Hon. Member for Cochrane-Superior (Mr. Penner) with respect to the gamble, the precariousness of our position and the stress one has when one leaves a job or business or profession to become a Member of this House. We all enjoy our participation here. We all know the demands, and we all know that there are no guarantees. That is a given. I am in complete agreement with those stresses that my colleague outlined.

I want, however, to spend a bit of time dealing with some of the comments of my friend, the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) who made some errors as a result of probably not having access to the library in the basement of the building we share. Let me review for the Chamber the occupations of some of the Members of this House. My friend suggested that most Members of the House were professionals. I think that is in error. The House will be pleased to know that some 40 Members of this Party are either school directors, teachers or professors. The fact that we attract this type of person shows the scope of the Progressive Conservative Party. Approximately 15 per cent of our Members come from that profession and I think that speaks well for the Party. Unfortunately, the Liberal Party has no school directors and only four of its Members are teachers or professors. The NDP has done much better there.

● (1740)

We have talked about the risk of leaving your business to serve in this place. Our Party has 55 Members who are described as businessmen, businesswomen or business executives. The House will be distressed to know that not one Member of the NDP classifies himself or herself as a representative of business. The NDP likes to say that it represents business, but when it comes right down to the hard facts they just do not have anyone from that background. That speaks to the narrowness of their point of view on several occasions. Fortunately we have four accountants in our Party who have come here to serve. We also have administrators. The NDP seems to have a big gap in that profession. In fact, they have none. That speaks to the way they operate. I just wanted to be fair and point that out.

A lot of people would say we are fortunate to have 39 lawyers. My colleague from Simcoe South says we are fortunate that number is coming down and he hopes it will continue