

*Motions*

certainly reluctant to disclose the purpose of the lobbying, to say nothing about the moneys involved. However, as the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt pointed out, if we have this list, it is critical that it must be somehow monitored and kept up to date. We have to be able to ensure that the information is current and that it is accurate. We are asking the lobbyists to be quite specific in what it is they are lobbying for. Perhaps they should indicate the amount of money they are being paid for carrying out their lobbying activities.

● (1250)

So there we have it. In committee we had the recommendations of the Government in terms of how to register lobbyists, what the clear definition of lobbyist is and a definition of lobbying. I think that clearly lays out what the Government should do.

As I said at the outset of my remarks, the pall that hangs over this institution, institutions of government generally, and, perhaps most important, the pall that hangs over the Government of Canada must be changed. It must be set aside to enable us all to get on with carrying out the business of Canada. If the Government were to take an immediate initiative and bring forward legislation reflecting the views of this thoughtful committee report, it would be a step forward in terms of clearing the air. It would indicate that the Government is concerned and prepared to take action. We are fortunate in that the Government now has before it such a comprehensive, thorough and thoughtful report on which to base legislation which, hopefully, will ensue quickly.

**Mr. Ravis:** Mr. Speaker, I am interested in the rather hard-nosed partisan approach the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis) takes. It seems to me that we should be given credit for what is happening these days. The fact is that the Government has established this committee to look into this particular issue. Times are changing. I do not think this issue was addressed by the previous administration. The fact is that a committee has been established and the report was brought down just a matter of weeks ago. Why does the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap ask why we have not addressed this issue? We have barely come down with the report. The ink is hardly dry. Yet the Hon. Member suggests that there is a great hurry for us to act. I suggest that legislation dealing with the matter is just around the corner.

**Mr. Riis:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question of my hon. friend. He makes a good point. I suspect that the type of issues to which I referred as set out in press clippings from, in a sense, the last few hours, that outline various alleged cases of influence peddling by various Members and government officials and the like is something which has been taking place since the time of Sir John A. Macdonald. Any student of history would be well aware of the long list of scandals that have brought down Governments and changed the course of history. Indeed, one of the themes of defeat of various Liberal and Conservative administrations was with respect to some type of scandal that involved lobbying activities. Quite frankly,

if one looks at the record one will see that for years the New Democratic Party and its predecessor, the CCF, have been calling for legislation of this type. We are still calling for it.

The Hon. Member is quite right and I give him credit. The Prime Minister promised that some action would be taken, and a study has now been done. As I said, we have been involved in this business long enough to know that if we want to dodge an issue we have just to study it. That is an acceptable way of dealing with a matter and it gives the illusion that action is being taken. I hope that the Hon. Member is right. I hope that just around the corner there will be legislation introduced. He can rest assured that if the legislation, which is hopefully around the corner, is a reflection of this thoughtful committee report then it will receive speedy passage by members of the New Democratic Party, and I suspect by all Members of the House.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask a question of my hon. friend. An interesting event that took place recently was the introduction of a Bill with respect to the Patent Act concerning prescription drugs. I want the Hon. Member to think about how a lobby register would have helped to make that whole process a great deal more transparent. When the lobbying groups appeared before the committee I asked a standard question of each one. I asked: Was your firm hired to lobby to get changes to the Patent Act concerning prescription drugs? All of them refused to answer. They took the fifth amendment. No one would own up.

I wish to ask the Hon. Member this. If we had had a lobby registration program, does the Hon. Member think that it would have helped in making the whole process of a Bill coming before Parliament a lot more transparent? Would it have put those who oppose such changes on the *qui vive* as it were, allowing them to make representations to the Government before it actually pushed the Bill through Parliament and before it resorted to using a sort of hobnailed-boot approach in committee with respect to it?

**Mr. Riis:** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member has posed a most thoughtful question. There is no question that there is the view in the country, as the results of recent polls suggest, that by and large Canadians are suspicious of the changes proposed to the Patent Act which are presently before the standing committee. People are under the impression that this measure is not in their best interests and that it is not good legislation in that it will not help Canadians. As a matter of fact, it is specifically designed to help multinational drug companies based in the United States. That is the perception that most people have. As we all know, in the real world perception is critical. A great deal of that perception could have been changed for the better if the lobbying efforts had been up front. I noticed the cynicism in the various media reports which dealt with the acceptance by a former Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs of a Liberal Government of a position to head an organization of foreign drug companies operating in Canada. Presumably the cynicism directed at her