

Government Orders

of our party. Of course that would be good for Canada, whether Canadians know it or not.

As a parliamentarian I believe there is no cause which should take greater precedence than to do things that in our hearts we know it is what our constituents would want us to do. They know what they want. We just have to ask them more often.

What about those other noble causes: our friends, our relatives, Alberta, Quebec, Canada, our parties? I believe our constituents would tell us that by simply representing their views accurately on every issue we would automatically collectively represent what is best for Canada, our political parties, our true friends, our families, our children and our grandchildren.

• (1250)

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to the hon. member's speech. I still cannot figure out whether the member is for or against the bill. It is indeed most difficult to do so. I know the hon. member is in favour of families and that is very good. He is probably in favour of wholesomeness as well and that is good too.

We are dealing with a bill today as proposed by the right hon. Prime Minister and as presented in the House by the Minister of Industry. I have waited a long time for this bill.

In 1987 I was a member of the Cooper committee, the original parliamentary committee which produced the legislation that exists today. The legislation was less than perfect. It did not include the major recommendations of the committee at the time.

One of the highlights of the Cooper bill was that after three years of coming into force the legislation would be up for review. The Holtmann committee did that review. I also was a member of that committee. If members have not guessed because of the defeats last year of course I am the only survivor of either committee and a survivor of both. Therefore, I have had the opportunity to work on this issue on several occasions in the past.

The report presented last year by the Holtmann committee was not a Tory bill as the member across the way said. It was a unanimous decision of the committee which was presented and received the broad support of the House. Maybe it was not the Reform bill but I do not apologize for that. It was a report produced by the duly elected people. Maybe that concept is alien to the member who just spoke as well, but it was produced by all of us in the last Parliament and it was unanimous.

Today I stand proud because the Prime Minister in producing this legislation included most of what we asked for. Ninety per cent of what was in our report has ended up in this legislation. Furthermore, there were things I was looking for as an individual member and the rest of the committee was not willing to put in the report last year. This Prime Minister has addressed those issues as well.

For example, last year the committee recommended in recommendation 22: "That lobbyists proceed immediately to establish a professional association with an industry-wide code of ethics". I wanted that to go a lot further. I produced an amendment to that at the committee saying that in addition to what was in recommendation 22 we should also have a measure whereby if lobbyists failed to produce their own code of ethics the government would impose one on them. That is what I wanted last year.

Guess what is in the bill now? The Prime Minister said that we will impose a code of ethics through the new independent officer who will overview this system. He will develop a code and he will impose it on the lobbyists. They have no choice. The lobbyists have had years to produce such a code but have failed to do so.

I recognize some of the difficulties that industry has. A few players in there were less than desirable characters but that is not true for the majority of them. Some very honourable people are lobbyists. No one can tell me that the representation from the Canadian Federation of Agriculture to my office is less than honourable.

[*Translation*]

Nobody can tell me that when people from the UPA call their MPs they do not have the best interest of their members in mind. Being a lobbyist is not in itself an undesirable activity. They are not all mean bastards. But a few rotten apples have spoiled it for everybody else.

And that is the truth. I say to the member who spoke before me that after being in Parliament for a while, he will realize that most lobbyists are honest, but a few of them have done rather suspicious things, to say the least.

• (1255)

[*English*]

Where does that bring us? Last year and the year before we were studying lobbying legislation. We were studying a new conflict of interest code. The Prime Minister has found a way, through this ethics counsellor, an independent officer, to impose rules that are even stronger than what we have now on the registration of lobbyists. He has addressed the issue of conflict of interest: one for ministers, their spouses and families; on the other side for members of Parliament, once we develop a code for ourselves. That is a very important consideration. It has been done. It has been addressed.