

politics in this country in the past has been the reluctance to involve the public in an open, frank and full way in the problems and with the information which we have.

Mr. Baldwin: The hon. member must not forget to use the word "fruitful".

Mr. Faulkner: It has been suggested to me that governments in the past—I am not being critical of this government because it, as well as the government headed by former Prime Minister Pearson, have gone a long way toward improving this situation—have not gone far enough in this area. Certainly, we have brought about improvements to involve the public and I think this is an important development in the democratic process. Yet in some ways the democratic process, which we have been talking about and which we have extolled in our schools and universities has been somewhat fraudulent. It has been a representative system which has had certain democratic features to it. But, really, fundamental democratic features have not been present—democratic features which involve the public at large.

I am talking of the public working in a meaningful way to supplement the activities of Members of Parliament. Therefore, I say that the right to know is basic, but the bill does not go far enough. Whether we like it or not—and I like it—we are moving into a situation wherein the right of access to decision-making is a right which the public at large will expect to have. We want to develop the machinery, if you like, to accomplish this end.

● (4:50 p.m.)

To its credit, this government through a variety of programs administered by the Department of National Health and Welfare, the Secretary of State and the Department of Manpower and Immigration, has been involved in this field by helping to finance the formation of citizens groups. These groups have challenged the representatives of the people at provincial, municipal and federal levels. These confrontations have at times been tough; they have called into question the priorities, the competence and the sincerity of those who were publicly elected. Nevertheless, this protest is a form of therapy which in my view is tremendously healthy for our country.

As I see it, the government will become increasingly involved in financing citizens groups of this type—whether tenants groups, or welfare groups does not matter; I have in mind groups of citizens formed to advance their particular interests. The institutions we presently have are totally inadequate to accommodate this kind of movement. Senator Croll has called attention to these developments in the course of recent comments and we now have to address ourselves to the question: What should be the relationship between the representative system to which we are accustomed and these extraparliamentary groups? If we stand always as protagonists, as those to whom these people must constantly address themselves

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as adversaries, the representative system will suffer. But if we can find a way of accommodating citizens groups—I do not mean "conning" them, but accommodating them—certain benefits are bound to follow.

The right of participation is a right in itself in a true democracy, but beyond this citizen participation has its own merits; it provides a check against technocratic decisions arrived at by elected representatives in conjunction with civil servants of university backgrounds who can in no way deeply understand or respond to the problems the citizens of this country generally face. In addition, the whole process of participation does in itself provide a sense of worth which citizens otherwise would not feel because they sense themselves to be alienated from the democratic process; only on rare occasions do they put anything into it at all. We should project the principle of involvement to a point at which all citizens, however humble, have a real involvement in decision-making. This would make the system more truly democratic than it is at present and help develop a sense of community in the country as a whole, which at present is lacking.

Mr. Bell: May I ask the Parliamentary Secretary a question, as one who is interested in this subject and who has just come from a luncheon in which one speaker representing the department tried to explain Information Canada? Can the Parliamentary Secretary tell us whether he honestly believes that in this new type of response to government publications, for example, by newspapers across Canada, the government will give the same publicity to views which are unfavourable as it will to views which are favourable?

Mr. Faulkner: I am surprised the hon. member should have any doubts on that score at all.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baldwin: He has not.

Mr. Faulkner: I personally have none whatever.

Mr. Bell: I will check a year from now.

Mr. Murray McBride (Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, since we have only a minute or two left I shall quickly put one or two thoughts on record and then defer in case hon. members wish to bring this bill to a vote. The hon. member for Surrey (Mr. Mather) is a consistent gentleman; he keeps coming back with the same bill. I had intended to comment on the first part of the measure, but my hon. friend from Sarnia-Lambton (Mr. Cullen) has already covered that ground so well that I will now refrain from doing so.

The hon. member for Surrey told us he had been singularly unsuccessful on the two previous occasions on which he had presented this legislation. He has now brought it back on Friday the 13th, an inauspicious date which cannot be a particularly favourable omen. He is a