

Speaker's Ruling

ple from entering politics or running for public office. For example, a study of members of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate conducted by the Centre for Responsive Politics in 1985 found no one who felt that financial disclosure affected his or her decision to seek public office”.

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Rodriguez: I want to tell my colleague that nobody twisted his arm to run for politics, to run for Parliament. He wanted to. If we set the rules, these are the rules. If he cannot accept the rules by which the game is going to be played then he should not get on the team. It seems to me that is pretty straightforward.

I want to deal with the other argument in the same way. All the provinces have this conflict of interest legislation with public disclosure.

An hon. member: What about Ontario?

Mr. Rodriguez: All of the provinces have it, including Ontario. It was brought in by the previous government. As a matter of fact we were just looking at David Peterson's report the other day. The member saw it. It is there and it has not resulted in anybody challenging anything in the charter.

Nobody has challenged it in the Supreme Court. It has not stopped people from running for provincial legislatures. As a matter of fact in the last provincial election in this country we had three times more people seeking seats than there were seats. It certainly has not prevented anybody from running.

What would conflict of interest legislation do? In my view conflict of interest legislation would prevent situations of conflict from deteriorating and becoming criminal acts. I believe that it will minimize the instances of potential conflicts becoming apparent or real, thereby improving the quality of public life. Third, I think it will go a long way in protecting elected members from unfair allegations.

Thus I think the public perception of Parliament would be enhanced so I recommend to my colleagues that there be support for the enacting of legislation that would provide conflict of interest guidelines.

Mr. Prud'homme: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Of course we have accepted your ruling and we cannot debate it, but may I at least call upon my colleague to try to restrain himself as much as possible from giving us in public what we are trying to arrive at together a good bill.

He is discussing with me and other colleagues the exact subject matter he is now talking about in public. We have abstained from giving the views of the committee publicly. It is only for *en français, on dirait pour le bon fonctionnement du comité*. I have no objection. I believe in conflict of interest laws. We are getting very close to using the same arguments with each other, trying to convince each other that this is the best bill possible.

• (2030)

[Translation]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Before giving the floor back to the hon. member for Nickel Belt, the Chair has had some time to think over the point of order raised by the hon. member for York South—Weston. I do not think that it is good to leave the House uncertain and so I think it useful to go over the chronology of events, given the sensitive subject before us.

On May 13, 1991, the hon. member for Nickel Belt presented a motion concerning, among other things, conflicts of interest for senior officials and senior political staff. On November 22, 1991, Bill C-43 was tabled in the House of Commons on first reading and this bill makes no mention of senior officials and senior political staff.

On the same day a special committee was created and the subject matter of Bill C-43, not the bill itself, was referred to it. On December 2, 1991, the motion of the hon. member for Nickel Belt was placed on the order of precedence. It was drawn by lot and placed on the order of precedence and on December 10, 1991, the committee was struck to consider Bill C-43.

In summary, we are faced with certain principles, the first of which is the right of any member to present bills and motions—this is an important point. Second, the motions are not identical. The motion for Bill C-43 is not the same as the one from the hon. member for Nickel Belt, since this one extends the debate to senior officials and senior political staff. Finally, the motion is not votable. That is why, under the circumstances, I think the Chair can allow a debate limited to one hour. On balance, weighing the pros and cons, I think that a member's legitimate right to present a motion could be weakened or violated by an overly strict interpretation of the rule which forbids discussing a bill that is already being considered in committee.