

*Lobbyists Registration Act*

well. All we have to do is work on defeating this Government and we will bring in the type of lobby registry Bill that ought to be brought in, which will assure Canadians of openness and transparency.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments? The Hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre.

**Mr. Keeper:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague to elaborate a bit on the very important point he made, that is, that the centre of power in the lobbying industry in Canada may not be with high profile agencies such as Public Affairs International or Government Consultants International. While these are the high profile actors in the whole field of lobbying, it is in fact the associations which hold the centre of power. They do not make the stories on the front pages of our newspapers so much as lobbyists do. I refer to the bankers and the pharmaceutical industry representatives. I refer to the Business Council on National Issues. Who knows how many average Canadians know what BCNI stands for? Will my colleague elaborate a bit on his conclusion that in fact these associations are the most powerful lobbyists in the capital?

**Mr. Rodriguez:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. It is an important one. It is a thought provoking one as well.

I would like to give two examples of how these associations have indeed wielded power in this Government. One is the Business Council on National Issues. The executive director of that organization is one Mr. Thomas d'Aquino. That organization is made up of probably the wealthiest corporations in this land, such corporations as Power Corp. They are the *crème de la crème*. They pride themselves on giving leadership to Governments of Canada. In fact, if one were to examine the journey of the free trade agreement that was signed by the Prime Minister and by Ronald Reagan, one would see that in fact here was a Prime Minister who as recently as 1983 said that we will have none of this free trade stuff with the United States. He said that the people said no to it in 1911 and they say no today. What changed his mind? As the piece unfolds it will be recognized that the BCNI was really pushing for the free trade deal with the United States. In fact, it put it on the agenda of the Prime Minister and lobbied the Government to accept the whole concept of free trade with the United States, which led to the subsequent negotiations. That is one point.

● (1620)

The other one concerns the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association. Apparently the lobbying association, PMA, approached the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs with respect to a change to the Patent Act that would extend and give protection to drugs for 10 years. That lobbying was ongoing, but because there was no registry there was no way that those who were opposed to that type of action had any inkling that they could present counterarguments to the Government and the bureaucracy. In fact, PMA persuaded the Government, and it fell neatly in line with the free trade deal

being negotiated at the time. With the one using the other we eventually saw Bill C-22 brought before the House.

I have mentioned the Bankers' Association only recently hitting the fan. In fact some may say that the banks held up the fan, when all that was happening was that great demands were being made for changes to the Bank Act that would ensure consumers a fair deal with bank service charges. The Finance Committee studied the matter, came back with a report, and demanded that the Government act. Lo and behold the Bankers' Association huddled with the Minister of State for Finance, and we got the Government's acceptance of voluntary compliance with respect to bank service charges. That is where that matter has ended.

I tell my hon. friend and colleague that as I have observed it the real powerful lobbyists around the capital are the associations. I believe that they twisted the Government's arm in setting up the two-tier system. That is why we have the associations in Tier II with only business card information, while those in Tier I have to disclose the issue. Knowing the issue that is being lobbied gives Canadians who may have a differing view an equal opportunity to provide information to government and bureaucracy, it is extremely important.

**Mr. Keeper:** When the legislation with regard to the generic drug industry was before the House, many ordinary Canadians were seeking to put pressure on the Government and were lobbying the Government to preserve the protection that they had in the generic drug industry against sky-rocketing drug prices. At the same time, the pharmaceutical industry was doing its own lobbying in order to forward its interests and be able to do whatever it wanted with regard to the price of drugs in this country.

At that time I remember hearing about some very quiet lobbying that was going on. In contrast to the public lobbying from ordinary citizens fighting for their rights, there was some very quiet lobbying going on in Washington. There was a leak of information of how the pharmaceutical industry of the United States was able to use the American Government in order to approach the Canadian Government.

Does my colleague believe that this legislation the Government has brought forward with regard to lobbying will throw light on the process of lobbying? Will it throw light upon how power is wielded in the capital? I am thinking of the whole question of the generic drug legislation as a case study.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** That is an excellent question. When the standing committee visited Washington in the United States, it found out that lobbyists were registered. One can go to the office where that information is kept on file and, for a fee, have the information pulled off the computer. If one has the name of the lobbying firm or the lobbyists, the information can be taken from the computer. The computer lists the name of the lobbyists, the lobbying firms, and the issues on which the lobbyists are lobbying, together with a list of all companies that are clients of particular lobbying firms.