

and all the provisions that prohibit a certain conduct and make it an offence.

• (1820 )

In areas of trust in which we are not dealing with specifics, like the illicit taking of funds or other clearly criminal acts, it is very difficult to draw that line between what is acceptable and what is not acceptable.

What happens, and what has happened in Bill C-43 and every other piece of legislation that I have ever seen, is that you end up turning it over to some person to make a judgment, and maybe the member can enlighten me if he knows differently. That would be permissible in many cases but if we are going to maintain the independence of elected representatives, if we are going to maintain their ability to stand up for their constituents, for the oppressed and for people all over the country who have problems then the last thing we want to do is place them under the control and supervision of a panel or individual that can make judgments with respect to their conduct. That would put an independent elected person into a kind of servitude.

Frankly, if that is what is necessary to restore public confidence in elected representatives then we are in serious trouble. If the public is going to elect somebody and then say: "But in your day-to-day activities, in the way you handle the affairs that are brought to your attention, you must answer to some official who is appointed to preside and monitor your activities" it will make members totally subservient to the judgment of that official. They will have to say to themselves: "Before I take this action I had better confer with the board of control and decide whether it thinks this is right or wrong".

We are grappling with a difficult problem. When we talk about codes of ethics and public ethics we are talking about a subject that has created havoc for centuries, from the days of Caesar and the Roman senate. There is no magic way to assure the public that it can have total reliance on those whom it elects. But the public does have the right—

Now we hear from the NDP. For years we thought it was the Conservatives and the Liberals who were the bad persons. We thought the NDP were pristine and pure.

### *Supply*

The difference was that it never got into government. We did not know what it was doing.

Then it forms the government in Ontario, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. Then we find out what is going on with the NDP. Then we find out about hiring friends as executive officials. Then we find out about giving contracts and about firing public officials and replacing them with political friends. What else do we find? The only problem with the NDP was that it did not have the opportunity to perform these unethical acts. Now that it has the opportunity it is performing them in spades. When members of the NDP stand up and give us lectures on ethics we can ask: "Hey, but does that apply to Bob Rae and his staff? Does that apply to the premier of Saskatchewan and his political appointees and contractors? Does that apply in British Columbia?"

Now they are not so clear about these ethical standards. Now that they are involved in a few little mischief making activities they are not so quick to debate this subject. What they will learn is what we have learned, which is that honesty and integrity come from within. They come from the people and from the persona of each individual. If they do not have it inside them then there is no any legislation that will legislate it for them or for the people of Canada.

The answer is that we should work toward some code of ethics. We should continue the task of writing a code that is acceptable and effective. I think that is what the Prime Minister wants and that is what he intended by introducing the bill for discussion.

**Mr. René Soetens (Ontario):** Mr. Speaker, I rise not to participate in this debate, though I have listened to it for a long time. Following the comment of the hon. gentleman my concern is that this debate is serving no useful purpose.

What bothers me more is that we do not even seem to have a quorum in the House to have it happen. I would point that out. It is in my opinion, according to Standing Order 29(1), that there is a lack of quorum in the House.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** I will ask the Clerk Assistant to count the members present.

*And the count having been taken:*