

Supply

political parties, I am just wondering how one would stop it.

First of all, if they choose to get involved in political parties, if that is what they want to do, they will still be volunteers without having offices or titles but they will still be there. As much as I agree in the spirit of what the member wants to do, I am not sure how we could achieve it.

I want to ask about another issue and that is this whole business of intermediaries because this is a loophole in the lobbying registration system, at least as I see it.

Right now if I want to hire a lobbyist or if company *x* wants to hire a lobbyist and company *x* does not want it to be known that the lobbyist was hired, all it has to do of course is hire a lawyer or an accounting firm and then have the accounting firm hire the lobbyist. In that way the only person who is registered is the intermediary as opposed to the end user, if I can put it that way.

Does my colleague agree with me that is an insufficient registry, that the actual person who is to be the beneficiary of the lobbying is the one that should be registered?

Mr. Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague and I remind him what I suggested about people who are actively involved in terms of a political party.

We have this problem with respect to banks and financial institutions. We pass laws regarding governance of those institutions and what kinds of relationships they can have. A term they use all the time is arm's length. I think it is important that we strive to establish that we parliamentarians and the people of Canada do not think highly of people who on the one hand go out and work for their political parties. There is nothing wrong with them having a party card in their back pocket but in this lobbying business you have got to make a choice because lobbying is not like any other business. It is not like school teaching. It is bordering on influence peddling.

It is a fact. One of the lobbyists coming before our committee said that in fact we made influence peddling a legal activity under the Lobbyists Registration Act. We have to be very careful.

On the question of intermediaries, of course, you are right. You have got to have who the beneficiary is going to be of the lobbying activity. I might also add that we should make sure that we do not allow coalitions. Often time you could have the coalition for clean air as the client of the lobbyist but we do not know who is in that and they are lobbying for a change in legislation.

You do not know who is in that coalition. It could be the worst air polluters going in the country, but they are all hidden under the clean air coalition. I think it is important to have the specific beneficiary of the lobbying activity and we should know and there should be full disclosure of who are members of the coalition.

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Madam Speaker, I would like to make a comment with respect to the whole matter of lobbying.

The member has pointed out the term influence peddling. There is a provision of the Criminal Code making influence peddling an offence and that is the difficulty of articulating an offence like that. If you can get paid for exercising influence and avoid the provision of the Criminal Code, you are apparently in a legitimate enterprise. I do not agree with that at all.

I would like to ask the member in relation to lobbyists and experience that he has had with them, should we not be focusing more on the people who are hiring lobbyists? Frankly I think in many cases they are not getting legitimate services from lobbyists. They know they are not getting any legitimate services from lobbyists and yet they are willing to pay large amounts of money for whatever services they are getting which could very easily fall into that category of so-called legitimate influence peddling.

• (1910)

Therefore, I hope that when he is examining lobbyists and the lobbyist legislation he pays a little attention to what the persons who are hiring lobbyists are doing. What role are they playing? If they are actually providing funds to lobbyists knowing that they are not getting any legitimate service for that then I think that they should be called to account.

Mr. Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, I think the point the member has made is an excellent one.