

Government Orders

This is a very good organization in its purpose. I do not want to indicate that I do not approve of what it is doing. However, Canadians demand a better fundraising effort on the part of the charities they are supporting than what we see here.

When we start examining these things we can take quantum leaps. I will now take a quantum leap to look at another charity, Wildlife Habitat Canada. This charitable organization is dedicated to improving wildlife habitats anywhere in the country and even in Britain.

This organization has managed to raise \$9,601 in private donations. In provincial and federal government donations it received \$2,711,000. It is important to keep these figures in mind: \$9,000 in private donations and over \$2 million in federal grants. It did raise funds, the \$9,000, and in fundraising costs it spent \$85,211. There is this incredible situation of an organization principally funded by government which spends \$85,000 on fundraising and raises only \$9,000. That is \$8.75 spent for every \$1 raised.

Canadians have good reason to question that type of activity. The average, ordinary taxpayer donated over \$2 million to that charity which obviously has a fundraising problem of a very high order. And so it goes, unhappily.

There is another one, the Canadian Ethnocultural Foundation. It actually spent \$14.40 for every \$1 it raised. It is not a very effective fundraiser either.

I could go on at great length. I would not want to do so because it is late in the afternoon and I fear I would depress you, Mr. Speaker. There are many hundreds of organizations like these that have problems.

Let me conclude my remarks by reading from a letter. This campaign is something I have taken a specific interest in and there has been a little news coverage from time to time. I have received over 250 letters from Canadians who agree that Parliament should be carefully examining how we fund all interest groups.

• (1635)

The spirit of that was captured in this one letter from an organization which states: "We are a registered charity ourselves. However we do not accept funding from any level of government. This has meant that funding has been lean at times, particularly in 1991 to 1993. But if one is doing anything worthwhile there are always citizens and foundations willing to support your work. This is perhaps the truest test of the value of a non-profit body".

Nowhere along the line does this government, nor do I as an individual, propose cutting funding absolutely from all interest groups. Many interest groups have an important role to play. They can do things that government cannot do. They can reach

out to people in society because they are out there in society. However we have to make sure that those groups we do support are the ones which can most effectively represent the interests of Canadians.

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, as always when the hon. member opposite is speaking the ears in this Chamber perk up. I say this quite sincerely because when my hon. colleague speaks, usually it is about something worthwhile and we can learn something if we listen. I would therefore most sincerely seek the counsel of the hon. member.

If we are looking at special interest groups and the financing of special interest groups via the public purse, certainly we in this House are no different from or worse than anybody else in that donations to political parties or campaigns receive a tax credit. We get beneficial treatment under the Income Tax Act as compared with another charity.

I would ask the member opposite to consider the following. If a private member's motion from the opposition were to come forward which would have the effect of ensuring that donations made to political parties would be subject to the same scrutiny and the same tax advantage as any other charitable donation, would the member opposite be supportive of such a move?

Mr. Bryden: I thank my colleague for the very good question. I never indicate how I will vote for legislation I have not seen beforehand.

I have great sympathy for what he is saying. The advantage in tax receipts political parties get versus charities is an area which needs to be reviewed. We have to philosophically ask ourselves whether it is really necessary that political parties enjoy that kind of advantage. There are some questions there as we would not want a situation to arise where politicians cannot support themselves.

One thing on this whole issue of special interest groups is at least the politicians, the Reform Party, the Bloc—and I particularly mention the Bloc because it has some very strong ideas about ceilings on political donations. This matter is something that needs to be reviewed and examined philosophically. We do not want to make it difficult for politicians to raise money. On the other hand, we ought not to have an untoward advantage. Certainly I would agree absolutely that the books should be wide open on any donations any politician receives.

[Translation]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I heard the hon. member for Wellington—Grey—Dufferin—Simcoe talk about possible cuts to the funds given to what he calls interest groups. However, his list of organizations contained a large number of what I would call community groups, which the hon. member urged to put greater reliance on fundraising. I feel that he is very sincere and that is why I will ask the following question. At the