

Motions

What about the *ad hoc* groups, "the committee to—" and I leave Hon. Members to fill in the blanks, whatever the committee happens to be? Their intention is to change public opinion. That is good. We all need that privilege. We want to protect and enshrine the right to change public opinion.

But there is a sense that the registration of lobbyists is indirectly at least an intention to register motives. What we see from a consideration of this report is that the motives are mostly financial. I am saying that that is not necessarily always the case. Where the motives are financial and taxpayers' money can be misused it is important that those lobbyists be registered. By the same token, and I think some of my friends would agree, there are some things in this life that are more important than money. In a world of ideas and conflicting ideas that issue becomes very important. If we are to exist in a world of conflict here in the House of Commons then we have to know what are the underlying premises. I am suggesting that it would be good for the lobby groups which come to us to register their backgrounds.

There is also another factor involved. It is what I would call either the cross-fertilization of groups or interlocking directorates. We live in an era in which lobby groups spawn. They multiply like rabbits. There is a new group forming every day, depending on the issue of the day. On closer examination one will find that where one parent group contains a board of directors, a board of management or an executive board, one, two or three of those board members will go off and form other groups that have allied goals but different titles. This multiplies the number of organizations, and they all purport to be different organizations. But if one looks at the organizational charts of each of these groups one will find that they are, in effect, one organization.

There is nothing wrong with that except that it creates an illusion. It creates the illusion that there is a growing mass of public concern about an issue, whereas, in reality, the possibility is that they are the same people multiplying the numbers of organizations. This creates the illusion that more and more organizations which are concerned about a particular issue are being formed. Yet we find on closer examination that they are actually all the same people.

Therefore, if we are to register lobbyists we need to get our mentality beyond financial concerns and look at some of the non-commercial, non-financial concerns that are just as important for the future of our country and the health of our nation. Perhaps it is important for all of those groups which lobby to declare what is their financial base. We have groups which are often funded by the federal Government which are into the whole world of advocacy. They are advocates for particular issues. If one looks at these organizations it is easy to see that they are frequently funded by the federal Government. Should it not be part of the requirement of these lobbyists to declare from where they receive their money and that in fact the federal Government is funding their operations?

There is one final question to which I must confess I have no answer. However, I think it is a growing concern for Members of Parliament. I refer to the lobbying which goes on by mail, not by individual constituents. I think it is right and proper, but more and more often we have briefs sent to us by organizations which never appear before us. I do not know how to handle the situation.

Mr. Heap: Shut down the Post Office. That will fix it.

Mr. Friesen: Yes, that is right. The fact is that these people are lobbying. We want them to do that. It is their privilege and their right. In many cases it is their responsibility to do so. Once we begin the process of registration of lobbyists then the issue begins to multiply. In effect, it tends to become confused.

The final point I wish to mention is with respect to the matter of compliance. I notice that the committee dealt with this issue on page 5 of its report. Where any deficiencies or irregularities are demonstrated it states that the Government should have the power to enforce compliance with the requirements of the register. I do not know how one would go about enforcing compliance. Sometimes these campaigns are single-issue campaigns. The issue arises, an *ad hoc* committee is formed to deal with it, and before we know it the lobbying is done and the group has dispersed.

The Minister who was in the House this morning indicated that the Government is actively pursuing the recommendations of the committee. I wish to compliment the members of the committee on their work. I urge the Minister to bring forward legislation as soon as possible so that we can have full disclosure as far as possible in terms of lobbyists who appear before us.

● (1600)

Mr. Riis: In his parting comments, my hon. friend indicated that he hoped the Government would take early action on this. We have waited for decades for this piece of legislation that is still only at the study stage. As a member of the Government, would the Member indicate what he might do to ensure that the Government does introduce legislation quickly regarding this critical matter?

Mr. Friesen: The Hon. Member is correct. We have waited for decades, and I wish we had not had to wait. As a matter of fact, my former colleague, the late Walter Baker, was very concerned about this particular issue. He worked on it considerably when he was a Member of the House. I would gladly sit with the Minister's group on the committee and work on the matter of this legislation. I take the Minister's word for it that it will be coming. I imagine that the legislation will be drafted before the summer break.

Mr. Boudria: I have a comment, Mr. Speaker. I listened to the remarks of the Hon. Member. I am sorry to say that his understanding of what we are trying to do in the report that we suggested is totally different from what we proposed to do. We have not expressed ourselves in a manner which is unclear.