

Government Orders

assurances the government has given us that it will cost nothing to implement the bill I remain highly sceptical.

The Liberal government talks the good talk of opening up the political process but it does not understand what that really means. When it states that it wants to facilitate better action to the political system it demonstrates through legislation like this that it does not fully understand the magnitude of the problem. Tinkering with the LRA will only take us one small step toward regaining the confidence of Canadians. The focus of this discussion for me is the confidence of Canadians. Tinkering with the lobbyists act demonstrates that the government recognizes special interest groups, endorses special interest groups, listens to special interests, funds special interest groups, and enacts legislation to satisfy special interest groups.

The Prime Minister speaks often of restoring the trust of Canadians. Neither the bill nor the motion will allow Canadians to control the government's overspending or to control its deficit of some \$40 billion and its debt of some \$519 billion. If the government were serious about winning the trust of Canadians it would get its fiscal house in order. Let me remind members opposite who have forgotten what real access to the political process means that the last government did not know what it meant. We all know where its members are buried. It appears that this one does not either.

Real access to the political process means giving real power back to Canadians as individual constituents. Let me share with the House, as I conclude, some beliefs that will demonstrate this. The government should be guided by stated values and principles shared by Canadians in their political beliefs. We believe public policy and democratic society should reflect the will the majority of the citizens as determined by free and fair elections, referendums, and the decisions of legally constituted and representative parliaments and assemblies elected by the people. This does not include buckling to undue pressure from lobbyists.

We believe in the common sense of the common people, their right to be consulted on policy matters that are public ones before major decisions are made, their right to choose and recall their own representatives and to govern themselves through truly representative and responsive institutions, and their right to directly initiate legislation for which substantial public support is demonstrated.

Unlike the hon. member for Saint-Denis we do not believe the average voter is illiterate and cannot print his or her name on a voting list. We believe in the accountability of elected representatives to the people who elect them and that the duty of elected members to their constituents should outweigh pressure from lobbyists and special interests.

Above all else, we must listen to the voices of our constituents. We will not permit the lobby of special interest groups to narrow our agenda.

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham): Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to rise in the House today to discuss Bill C-43. We cannot represent others if we cannot control ourselves. I think that is the essence of the bill. It is very important members of Parliament, parliamentary secretaries and cabinet ministers be able to control themselves.

The essence of the bill is basically to restore integrity to our system. We can all remember going through the last election that one of the big issues was respect for members of Parliament. Clearly members of Parliament were not well respected. They were held in contempt in some cases. Some of this issue has not gone away by the mere exercise of an election. There is still a great deal of mistrust out there. It is a very good move our Prime Minister is so concerned about the issue that he personally brought the bill to the House.

I would like to discuss two specific aspects of the bill into which it is basically divided. First are changes under the Lobbyists Registration Act and second is the establishment of conflict of interest guidelines.

• (1330)

Why would we need a lobbyist in the first place? Companies do have the right to have lobbyists. I know we talk about tier one and tier two lobbyists. Essentially companies would have the right to be represented to their governments.

I think the real essence of it is that this representation needs to be tempered. There must be a balance. What do I mean by a balance?

In my riding this week I dealt with a Mrs. Elizabeth Wardell of Bowmanville. She was trying to live on a disability income of \$850 while at the same time paying \$350 a month for drugs. She gets no support from our system.

I would like to argue that Mrs. Wardell has just as much right to consideration under drug patent legislation as the largest drug companies of this country. Indeed many of us may argue that she has more of a right. I will repeat again, influence must be tempered.

The most important views of this country are not those of Bay Street, James Street or Howe Street, but of Main Street, Main Street Canada. The new legislation will increase the visibility of the lobbying process.

I would like to refer to those areas of changes to the existing lobbying registration act. Lobbyists will now be required to disclose what departments and government agencies they will contact, disclose communication methods to be used and register the name of the departments and governmental agencies to be contacted.