

Regulatory Reform

up today because it has been a sore spot with me for years. I can assure the Canadian public that if there is a change in Government, they will finally see some meaningful changes to the way regulations are made, the way they are implemented and the people who are consulted when they are made. Westerners will be consulted as well. In fact, our report pointed out that in many cases, small businessmen felt that the regulators were regulating for the benefit of the big companies and not for the benefit of the small companies. I have not seen any change to that situation over the years, and that is criminal as well.

An office of the co-ordinator of regulatory reform was set up, but it was only a persuasive body. How does one control a government using only persuasion? Quite frankly, one must hit this Liberal Government over the head. It is the old story of the donkey and the two-by-four. First one must get its attention, and that cannot be done persuasively. However, if we had a proper parliamentary committee, as recommended in the report, a committee that could call the Minister before it and says: "What is this stupid regulation that your Department is proposing," and have him defend his regulation, I think we would have fewer and better regulations than we do now.

Let me refer to the speech I gave in 1981. I would sincerely hope that every businessman who heard it then will remember it now, because they were prophetic words. At that time I said that everything was great but that we should take a look at what the Government would do. After I made my speech, I told those businessmen to watch the Government and see if all of its good words meant anything, see if it would pay any attention to the Economic Council of Canada, and see if it would pay any attention to the task force on regulatory reform. I told them that there was no question about the fact that the Government would do a few things and, to give it credit, it has done a few relatively unimportant and minor things. It has certainly not done anything that could embarrass the Government and it has certainly not done anything that would relieve the burden on the business community of the country. As I said in my speech of 1981:

I mention this because I do not believe there will be real meaningful regulatory reform until Jeremy Bentham's pain and pleasure principle can be applied to bureaucrats.

Well, that principle has not come to the fore.

The test will come this fall—

At that time, I meant the fall of 1981.

—as to how really serious this Government is about cleaning up the regulatory mess. One of the task force recommendations was for a special committee on regulations composed of no more than ten members, dedicated to the work, and with an adequate staff to do the vital research. This committee should have the power to review any new or old regulation for that matter. It should have the power to summon witnesses and should have a mandate large enough to disallow improperly processed regulations and censure Departments for not having done their homework. It should be a committee that any businessman, labour organization, consumer association or any special interest group could put their case to and have the Department answer fully their concerns. There is no such mechanism in the Canadian Government at this time. There is no way except lobbying the Department to get a hearing and many times that is mere formality and courtesy.

• (1650)

The committee was never set up. It should have been. Unfortunately, it became clear in our research at that time that there was a mental set in some Departments according to which, if there was a problem, a regulation was made. Alternatives, costs and consultation did not necessarily receive the attention they deserved before implementation. It was true four years ago and it is true today. I went on to say:

When so very much of the law we live under is subordinate law making by bureaucrats in the form of regulations such a committee of Parliament could play a vital role in protecting all of us from excess.

This Government would not agree with that. This Government would not do it for fear of embarrassment. I went on:

There is a downside—

At least I was fair, and I point this out:

There is the possibility of embarrassment for the Minister of the Crown concerned. But that spur is what is needed to ensure that subordinate lawmaking be really in the public interest.

I challenged the Government then and I challenge it now: Why does it not make Parliament more meaningful? I had such a hope, and in 1981 I said: "But you be the judge . . . when the Government brings in its proposals for reform of the committee system". I went on to say that it would give them a real insight into how serious the Government was about regulatory reform.

Anyone who was watching saw how serious the Government was. It was not very serious at all. I would hope that perhaps with a Bill such as this we could start the process. At least the matter would be brought back to the public's attention so that they would realize that they have a Government that does not give a damn about regulatory reform. Every businessman in the country is suffering from that neglect. It is costing them money and, in many cases, it is needless. I sincerely hope that those businessmen remember what this Government has done to them when they get to the ballot box.

My final point is that the Economic Council reports are first rate. The research had been done and the recommendations had been presented. There has been some small activity by the Government. But what was in that economic report and what was in the report of the Special Committee on Regulatory Reform was another couple of Glasco reports upon which the Government will not act because it simply might embarrass it.

I will close by saying simply: God help the poor Canadian businessman if he does not realize who is doing these terrible things to him. The Government does the work, but then it ignores it. A Progressive Conservative Government will not ignore it.

Mr. Jim Peterson (Willowdale): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with a great deal of interest to the two opposition speakers and the one government speaker on this particular question. First, I would like to thank the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) and acknowledge the job which he has done in raising this issue about regulatory reform and the burden of regulation which is on the private sector in Canada. I would also like to thank my colleague, the Hon.