

Registration of Lobbyists

certainly will have to be clarified as in many cases the chief executive officer would be accompanied to Ottawa by some of the elected or appointed members either as resource people or to share the work load.

He was really asking, "What is the extent of the disclosure?" The letter continues:

The next point to be covered of course is the persons hired temporarily by an association for a specific job. These persons may vary depending on their expertise. Supposing it is a piece of legislation under the Competition Act, you may hire a corporate lawyer or if it is a bill concerning say the Health Protection Branch, you may hire a lawyer who is well versed in food and drug regulations. Very often the same lawyer could not accompany you or could not do the lobbying for you and he may send his assistant. Do you therefore extend a blanket coverage to all people appointed and hired by the association or does it only apply to an individual.

Furthermore, we think that registered lobbyists may take advantage of the fact that they are registered, canvas firms that may be interested in having lobbying done on their behalf and thereby weaken the efforts of the association. While this, of course, is left to the discretion of the individual firms, i.e. whether they want to go through the association or through a private lobbyist, sometimes the private lobbyist, who let's say is a retired senior civil servant, may have some appeal that outweighs the advantages of acting jointly through an association.

In effect, he was saying that it is important that this type of question go to committee. The Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections could study this, and I am sure it would receive a great deal of correspondence from a growing army of people who come to this capital and others to influence—I am using that word in its best sense—the direction of public policy.

I commend my hon. friend for bringing this Bill forward today and I am prepared to support it. I hope that after a short debate the Bill will go to committee for discussion. I think that it could be improved by the committee. I expected my Bill to be improved and I am sure my hon. friend expects the same for this one. I see that he nods in agreement. I am sure that its time has come in our legislative and governmental process.

I hope at the end of today's debate the House will see fit to send the Bill to committee where the subject matter can be dealt with. I believe it is important. I think my friend has done a public service in bringing it forward today. I close as I began, by saying that if Your Honour had cast his eye in my direction when calling for a seconder for the Bill, I would have been pleased and honoured to do so.

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I want to join the two previous speakers in giving my support and the support of this Party to the concept that is suggested. I must confess that I have some reservations about the actual legislation. The Bill is a good one but it may have to be changed in order to make it work in the way that the Hon. Member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore (Mr. Robinson) would like it to work. That matter could be taken care of in committee where some of the minor and even the more important deficiencies could be dealt with, as could the last point made by the Hon. Member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker). He raised the question of how one could identify the lobbyist as opposed to a lobbying group, and how one takes care of an association as opposed to the private individual or private lawyer who has contacts in Government as a result of having been involved behind the scenes with one or other of the political parties.

I think we must never be seen as trying to subvert or dissuade public input. That is to be encouraged. It is essential

that the public at large feel free to contact Members of Parliament whether they be in the Senate, the House, in Opposition in the backbenches or in Cabinet. Members of the public must know that we want this input, but we must make it easier for them to participate.

What we are doing today may make it easier for the public to participate. They will be better able to judge the arguments advanced by certain, and sometimes high-priced, individuals who put forward the position of a particular vested interest but fail to identify that party. I think members of the public would be less likely to be influenced if they fully understood that the person making the argument to Government was a lobbyist paid to do so. From that point of view I think the Bill is valuable.

From another point of view it is valuable as well. I think it is important that the public should be able to identify the players in the field. Those of us who are in politics and have been for some time know that there are certain people who are in and out of government. I do not mean in and out of elected office necessarily, but in and out of government—in the Privy Council, out lobbying later; back into a senior Government position, out lobbying later, working to make people Prime Ministers, out lobbying later. I am sure the House knows the kind of people I mean.

• (1740)

Mr. Keeper: Liberals.

Mr. Deans: Not necessarily. The Hon. Member might be surprised to know that there are even two or three Tories who do this. I think it is valuable that we should have that kind of information readily available. There is a need to show that it is legitimate to be a lobbyist but, more important, there is a need to show that certain people in the country in fact exercise considerably more influence than others, even though they are faceless and frequently nameless. By making provisions such as those brought forward by the Hon. Member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, we would at last be able to see the faces and names of those who exercise the power behind the scenes. I think that is important.

I commend the Hon. Member for Nepean-Carleton because he has been pushing for this for years. I had reason to read a number of comments made by him over some years and comments attributed to him in addition to the ones he had made personally. His interest is longstanding. He very carefully set out that he did not want in any way to dissuade people from becoming lobbyists, as did the Hon. Member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore. It is not a matter of trying to keep people from doing it. It is a matter of trying to get people who want to represent the views of other people to be prepared to stand up publicly and to be placed under the kind of scrutiny which is inevitably put on those who are doing work for pay. There are individuals who, on a matter of conscience on any subject, decide out of their own pockets or by joining with some friends, to attempt to influence the Government's course of