

Government Orders

I believe that this is a sincere attempt by this corporation to put forward a basic set of ethics by which it operates. The problem we have though is that today there is a perception in this city and in this country that the lobbying industry is not functioning properly or fairly. This is an industry with fees of close to \$100 million last year. That is an awful lot of money being paid by people throughout Canada to lobbying firms that approach not only MPs and ministers but officials to put forward the particular customer's position on a particular issue.

The time has come for us to radically reform the Lobbyists Registration Act. Perception being reality we have now developed an industry that has a very bad reputation. We should be examining a bill introduced in the Senate of the United States just recently, S-349.

• (1050)

The purpose of this bill is the effective public disclosure of the identity and the extent of the efforts of paid lobbyists to influence federal officials in the conduct of government actions. By doing that it will increase public confidence in the integrity of government.

Then it goes on to say in section 5(b)(2)(D)(3): "That in the case of a lobbyist lobbying on behalf of a client other than the registrant a good faith estimate of the total amount of all income from the client including any payments to the registrant by any other person to lobby on behalf of the client during the semi-annual period other than income for matters that are unrelated to lobbying activities".

In section 5(b)(2)(D)(4): "In the case of a registrant lobbying on its own behalf a good faith estimate of the total expenses that the organization and its employees incurred in connection with lobbying activities during the semi-annual filing period".

In the United States people must file every six months and they must be very specific about all their lobbying activities.

As we are discussing this Lobbyists Registration Act we should examine this bill from the United States. We should not just have the amounts of money that lobbyists receive from specific clients but should list the officials and MPs who are being approached by the lobbyists. Officials should also report to ministers' offices when they are being lobbied and report the specific issue. In

1985 the Prime Minister said that he was going to reform the lobbying system in this country and that he was going to develop a transparent system.

It is almost 10 years later and we have not done that. I am hearing from many people, from customers of lobbyists and from lobbyists, that they would now like to have a system that would restore the image that the lobbying industry in this country once had. We can only do that by having full disclosure of all the activities that are going on.

As part of Bill C-76 there is a little cost recovery measure related to the Lobbyists Registration Act. The government wants to charge a fee of the companies that are registering. That does not even come close to addressing the real issue that needs to be addressed.

I ask all members of this House to support the chairman of the consumer and corporate affairs committee and radically reform this act.

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre): Madam Speaker, I rise to talk about the amendment to the Canada Student Loans Act. We have a number of amendments on the Order Paper calling for an overhaul of the student loans act. Back on February 25, 1992 the Minister of Finance indicated that he would be negotiating a new arrangement for student loans with financial institutions and that he would eliminate the 3 per cent administration fee on student loans.

The bill came before the House and the 3 per cent tax still exists. In fact the student population was denied the right to appear before the committee in order to make its case. There was no consultation whatsoever when it came to this part of the bill. Also, the bill itself imposed an extra burden on the students.

If we examine the student loan and its impact on students the latest statistics show that there are in excess of 10,700 students in the Canadian system who have over \$15,000 in terms of loans they must repay. That figure has increased by more than 500 per cent over the past four years alone.

If we consider the 3 per cent tax increase, which I and my colleagues in the Liberal Party feel should not exist, as well as the way in which the government is managing student loans one cannot help but say there is a major problem that must be addressed.