

*Private Members' Business*

What we are dealing with here is activity that falls short of criminal activity, but is still improper in that MPs and senators could use their offices in order to gain personally or through their families.

• (2050)

I support disclosure but not full public disclosure. Let me explain the reasons why. The member talks about disclosure but he does not indicate why disclosure is necessary. Is he suggesting that once an MP discloses what he or she has publicly, that MP is free then to be involved in a conflict of interest? In other words, is the member suggesting that once you disclose, that becomes your *carte blanche* or your opportunity to be in a conflict of interest situation? With all due respect, he did not say that in his submission. Once a member discloses publicly then that member ought to withdraw from the debate, declare the conflict, not participate and not vote. I have not heard the member advocate that yet. This has to be clarified.

In my view, MPs ought to disclose to a jurist counsel, a commissioner or a well-respected, highly revered individual by way of prescribed form, assets and liabilities without having to disclose to the public. Frankly I do not believe the public wants to know what assets each individual member of Parliament has, what cars they drive, what bank accounts they have, where those banks accounts are, what shares they own in what companies, what debts they might have. All they want is some honesty and integrity from the people that sit in this House.

The NDP want spouses to also be required under the law to disclose. If you think about that it is pretty old fashioned thinking, thinking that is unbecoming of the New Democratic Party. The New Democratic Party often advocates equality, fairness, the Charter of Rights. Our spouses are independent people. They have lives of their own. The member for Nickel Belt in his submission and in his goal would almost treat spouses as chattels of MPs that they can lead by the nose and force into disclosing. That is not fair. Spouses have their rights to privacy.

This member wants to have the public to know exactly all the assets and liabilities of his wife. I wonder whether that member has spoken to his spouse about whether or not she may or may not agree. The fact is that there are a significant number of spouses who object to having their

lives fully exposed by way of public disclosure. I do not think it is fair. It would lead to systemic discrimination. It is chauvinistic and it is old-fashioned thinking. It is somewhat surprising coming from the New Democratic Party that they want to require spouses to have to disclose publicly all their assets.

I support disclosure but only private disclosure. As well, let us not forget that we have to distinguish between MPs and members of the cabinet. There has to be a different regime for cabinet ministers, a higher level because they are exposed to more private information and are able to influence public policy more than average members.

I regret that my time is up. We will have the opportunity in this House in the not too distant future for all MPs to offer their views on a piece of legislation that this committee will bring forward that I believe will be fair and equitable to all those involved including MPs, senators, their spouses and bureaucrats.

**Mr. Patrick Boyer (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence):** Mr. Speaker, tonight we are debating ethical conduct in government. As previous speakers mentioned, yesterday those of us, myself included, who are members of the parliamentary committee dealing with this subject, began at 8.15 a.m. and went through to 5 p.m. non-stop. Tonight in the House of Commons we are debating it. Tomorrow morning, we start again at 9.30 a.m. This is in addition to other matters.

What we are discussing of course is the subject matter of Bill C-43, the government's legislation which substantially addresses the points raised in the motion before us tonight from the member for Nickel Belt. I believe that the public trust rests on a belief and on a conviction that those in public office will conduct themselves in an ethical fashion.

Those of us holding public office, whether with great or modest responsibilities, carry with us a portion of the responsibility for the destiny of our country and for the carriage of the government of the day and also a part of the trust which the Canadian people vest in government. That is why the issue before us tonight of ethical conduct in government is one of transcending importance because in a democracy, ultimately our system of government depends upon the consent of the governed, not the coercion of the governed.